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HEGEL — FROM FOUNDATION TO SYSTEM

DAVID LAMB



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HEGEL—FROM FOUNDATION TO SYSTEM

by

DAVID LAMB



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For
Harold and Elizabeth Lamb

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INTRODUCTION

One of the guiding thoughts throughout this work is that G.W.F. Hegel is the philosopher of the modern age, that subsequent philosophers, whether or not they have read his works, must take their stand in relation to Hegel. My purpose is not only to present Hegel, but to show that his influence has been felt for some time, even though his presence has not been explicitly acknowledged.

In spite of a recent revival in Heglian scholarship, the history of philosophy in the English-speaking world is generally obscured by a period of darkness between Kant and the early inquiries of Russell and Frege. A place is assigned to Mill and Bentham, but even today very few Anglo-Saxon philosophers would be prepared to recognise Marx as a philosopher, although it is widely held that Marx was in some way influenced by Hegel, which is probably a good reason for not paying too much attention to the latter. At best, an understanding of Hegel is relevant to an understanding of Marx, but it is not considered that Hegel made a significant contribution to the mainstream of Western philosophy from Descartes onwards, and it is assumed that he is of little relevance to the 'linguistic revolution' pioneered by Wittgenstein, Ryle, and Austin.

Against this view, I offer the thesis that Hegel has a definite place in the history of philosophy and that he was concerned with philosophical issues raised during the second half of this century. It could well be as Merold Westphal suggests, that if Hegel were to 'awake to the present like Rip Van Winkle, he might not detect his long nap for some time, if a few names could be changed'.[1] My thesis can be described as an attempt to make Hegel speak English, since I reject the idea that Hegel's notorious claim to make philosophy speak German has anything at all to do with the attempt to make it speak exclusively German. I completely reject the view, advanced by T.D. Weldon, that it is hard to make Hegel's dialectic plausible or even intelligible in English because we lack any word with ambiguities parallel to those of the German 'Aufheben'.[2] It is true that Hegel relied heavily on the peculiarities of his native tongue, but it is not the case, as is often implied, that his philosophy hangs on a

specialist vocabulary employed only by German philosophers any more than the problems tackled by Austin and Ryle are exclusively English. Hegel, like Wittgenstein, was fiercely opposed to the reliance upon a specialist terminology in philosophy; for him, the medium of philosophy was the language of 'cultivated thought', the language of culture and science in which philosophical puzzlement has its origins. Like any other philosopher, Hegel used the language at his disposal, stretching it to its limits. The true Hegelian will do likewise and will not remain trapped within concepts applicable only to nineteenth-century Europe.

No language has a monopoly over philosophical puzzlement. Questions concerning the nature of knowledge, truth, life, God, and so on, are neither solved nor dissolved within the surface forms of natural languages. They are, like many scientific questions, supranational insofar as they arise within similar forms of life.

In making Hegel speak to an English audience, one must be aware of his strictures against the prefacing of philosophical theses. Instead of a summary or assessment of his work, I present a discussion based on topics currently under discussion in philosophy and the sciences. Other participants include twentieth-century representatives such as Russell, Moore, Wittgenstein, Kuhn, and Feyerabend. Familiar concepts within twentieth-century philosophy will be presented in terms of a continuing debate with Hegel, since the Hegelian method is alive only insofar as it can be applied and extended towards further developments in knowledge. The following work is presented on two levels. On the one hand, I have attempted a detailed exegesis of a few sections of the *Phenomenology*, drawing whenever necessary on other works by Hegel. A lack of space and time prevent a full exegesis. This has the disadvantage of missing the 'wholeness' of Hegel's work, but the advantage of a detailed study of a few topics is, to me, a more attractive alternative. Secondly, I have attempted to bring out the philosophical problems in these sections and discuss them in a twentieth-century setting.

In chapters I and II, the discussion centres on the time-honoured tradition of positing foundations, or limits to human knowledge. Out of the initial discussion emerges a guideline which shows how Hegel's concept of system supersedes the foundational approach. The 'overcoming' of foundationalism involves a distinctly different concept of philosophy. The alternative to foundationalism is that philosophy must be descriptive. This is the most important transition in the *Phenomenology*; occurring in the Introduction, it determines the tone of the subsequent chapters. We might say that, on the one hand, Hegel's *Phenomenology* is a description of a series of 'shapes

of consciousness' akin to Kuhnian 'paradigms', whilst, on the other hand, the entire work exhibits a 'paradigm switch' within philosophy from constructive to descriptive metaphysics. The standpoint outlined in chapters I and II necessitates an investigation of Hegel's descriptive approach to the dialectic of history. Chapter III attempts this in a lengthy digression from the *Phenomenology* which focuses on a clash between two shapes of consciousness presented in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. Whilst chapter III concentrates mainly on the way one system, or whole, replaces another in the sphere of ethics and politics, chapters IV to VIII return to the theme of contrasting foundations with system, the medium being language and the sciences, respectively. Since the concept of an organic system is central to Hegel's work, the analysis of his account of Organic Nature in chapters VII and VIII can be said to focus on the heart of his conception of truth, wholeness and system. Only after a study of the various sciences and their philosophical dimensions can one, in Hegel's terms, be ready to understand the nature of philosophy itself. The final chapters are therefore concerned with the task of elucidating Hegel's conception of philosophy and consist of an investigation into the medium appropriate for philosophical expression. In chapters IX and X, religious and artistic thought determinations are contrasted with philosophical discourse, whilst in the final chapter, the discourse appropriate to philosophy is approached via Hegel's analysis of the philosophical proposition.

Throughout this work, I have leaned heavily on Wittgenstein and many other modern writers. This reference to recent scholarship serves a dual role. First, it is intended to render Hegel intelligible to the twentieth-century perspective; and second, it brings out an essential aspect of Hegel's own conception of philosophy: that the philosopher should use the knowledge at his disposal. Whenever relevant, I have indicated similarities between Wittgenstein and Hegel. This does not mean that an attempt is being made to 'prove' that Wittgenstein was a Hegelian – although it does reveal that Wittgenstein's contribution is not such a break with the past as many of his disciples would have us think. My intention is partly to render Hegel clear to an age in which Wittgenstein's philosophy is seen to be the dominant one; but of greater importance is the attempt to demonstrate the convergence of paths away from constructive metaphysics. Both Wittgenstein and Hegel reveal a definite move away from the critical approach towards a descriptive philosophy. In Hegel's case the point of departure was the Kantian critique, in Wittgenstein's case it was from the critical programme envisaged in the *Tractatus*, which is in many ways similar to the Kantian endeavour.

Much has been written to explain Hegel's standpoint, and controversy continues over what he really meant. Perhaps this is how it should be, for a descriptive philosophy which makes allowances for different ways of seeing the world should be subject to a variety of interpretations relative to the way others see the world. My own contribution, however, is not intended to be a preface or a sketch, but is to be understood as a presentation of some of the important issues in Hegel's texts, which a reader, unacquainted with the jargon that has surrounded Hegelian scholarship, may wish to continue.

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I wish to express my thanks to the editors of *Clio* for permission to include a slightly modified version of my paper, 'Hegel and Wittgenstein on Language and Sense-certainty', which appeared in volume 7, number 2, 1978. I am also indebted to the numerous commentators on Hegel, whose works are referred to throughout this book, and to various other writers on philosophy and the sciences to whom I owe an intellectual debt. I have also benefitted from discussions with Professor A.R. Manser of the University of Southampton, with Dr Sue Easton of the University of Sussex, and from further discussions with students and staff of the Universities of Southampton, Sussex, and Kent. Finally, I wish to express my thanks to Heather King for her most valuable secretarial assistance throughout this project. The usual disclaimers apply.

ABBREVIATIONS

Unless otherwise stated, references to the German editions of Hegel's work will be to *Werke* volumes I–XX, edited by E. Moldenhauer and K.M. Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), hereafter indicated by the initials MM. As an additional guide, each reference to the German text will be accompanied by a reference to the standard English text and the translator's initial. Full details of these and of the English translations will be given in the Bibliography. The quotations from the works of Hegel that are cited in this book have been translated by the author, unless otherwise indicated.

HEGEL

PG *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. The English translation is the James Baillie text. Whilst all references are to this text, significant use has been made of Walter Kaufmann's translation of Hegel's *Preface* to the *Phenomenology in Hegel: A Reinterpretation, Texts and Commentary*; also the Kenley Royce-Dove translation of the *Introduction* to the *Phenomenology* in his translation of Martin Heidegger's *Hegel's Concept of Experience*.

GP *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*. The English translation is by E.S. Haldane and F.H. Simson.

Enz. I *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*. The English translation is *The Logic of Hegel* by William Wallace. References are to paragraph numbers which are the same in both texts.

Enz.II The English translation is *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature* by A.V. Miller. References are to paragraph numbers. (References taken from the editorial *Zusätze* are indicated by Zu.)

Enz.III The English translation is *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind* by William Wallace, with the *Zusätze* translated by A.V. Miller. References are to paragraph numbers.

L *Wissenschaft der Logik*. The English translation is *Hegel's Science of Logic* by W.H. Johnston and L.G. Struthers.

A *Vorlesungen über die Äesthetik*.

PR *Philosophie des Rechts*. The English translation is *Hegel's Philosophy of Right* by T.M. Knox.

Ph.G *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*. The English translation is *The Philosophy of History* by J. Sibree.

WITTGENSTEIN

NB *Notebooks* 1914–16.

TLP *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*. References are to paragraph numbers.

BB *The Blue and Brown Books*.

RFM *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*. References are to paragraph numbers.

PI *Philosophical Investigations*. References are to paragraph numbers.

OC *On Certainty*. References are to paragraph numbers.

LC *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*.

Z *Zettel*. References are to paragraph numbers.

PART ONE

THE FOUNDATIONS OF KNOWLEDGE

CHAPTER I

FOUNDATIONS

I'll sound the heights and depths that man can know,
Their very souls shall be with mine entwined,
I'll load my bosom with their weal and woe,
And share with them the shipwreck of mankind

(Goethe, *Faust*, I)

1. FOUNDATION AND EDIFICE

The opening sentences of the Introduction to the *Phenomenology* draw attention to an assumption that has been shared by philosophers ranging from Descartes to the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*:

It is a natural assumption that, in philosophy, one must first come to an understanding concerning the nature of knowledge before taking up the real subject matter, namely the actual knowledge of what truly is. Knowledge, in turn, tends to be regarded as the instrument with which one takes hold of the absolute or as the medium through which one discovers it. The concern that there may be various kinds of knowledge, of which one might be better suited than another for attaining the end in view, seems moreover legitimate, for by making an erroneous choice among them, one will thus grasp clouds of error instead of the heaven of truth; and when knowledge is taken to be a faculty of a determinate kind and scope, the concern once again seems legitimate that error will be grasped instead of truth unless the nature and limits of this faculty are still more precisely determined. (PG.MM.68/B.131)[1]

Philosophy is concerned with the knowledge of truth, reality, and being, but a central preoccupation of philosophers, since Descartes and Locke, has been with the conditions of knowing rather than the actual content.[2] This has led, initially, to a desire to determine the limits of human knowledge, to examine the foundations of knowledge before proceeding with the construction of the edifice, a very sound principle in practical matters. If it can be proved that there is a fault in the foundations, it is not essential to examine the edifice brick by brick. This is why Descartes took it upon himself to examine only the first principles of knowledge:

And for that end it will not be requisite that I should examine each in particular, which would be an endless undertaking; for owing to the fact that the destruction of the

foundations of necessity brings with it the downfall of the rest of the edifice, I shall only in the first place attack those principles upon which all my former opinions rested.[3]

Locke also saw it as his purpose 'to inquire into the origin, certainty, and extent of human knowledge, together with the grounds and degrees of belief, opinion, and assent'.[4] Knowledge, according to Locke, was an instrument which should be 'precisely determined' lest it deceive. As an instrument, it was important to know its limits, just as it is 'of great use to the sailor to know the length of his line', since he may require it to 'caution him against running upon shoals that may ruin him'.[5]

Philosophy, held Berkeley, consists solely of 'the study of wisdom and truth', but 'no sooner do we depart from sense and instinct to follow the light of a superior principle, to reason, to mediate, and reflect on the nature of things, but a thousand scruples spring up in our minds. . . .'[6] He, too, resolved to 'make a strict inquiry concerning the first principles of human knowledge to sift and examine them from all sides. . . .'[7] Hume, of course, denied the possibility of explaining the ultimate principles of human knowledge, though he nevertheless held to the same foundational approach as his predecessors when he sought indubitable foundations for the science of man:

And as the science of man is the only solid foundation for the other sciences, so the only solid foundation we can give to this science itself must be laid on experience and observation.[8]

Aroused from his 'dogmatic slumbers' by Hume, Kant, assuming that he required nothing more than 'common logic', undertook a critique of the faculty of human knowledge as a precurser to its employment. Introducing his critique, Kant spoke of the need

to institute a tribunal which will assure to reason its lawful claims, and dismiss all groundless pretensions, not by despotic decrees, but in accordance with its own eternal and unalterable laws. This tribunal is no other than the *critique of pure reason*.[9]

The initial stages of the twentieth-century 'linguistic revolution' were a variation of the same theme. Instead of a critique of knowledge, Wittgenstein, the foremost exponent of the 'linguistic revolution', advocated a critique of language. Comparing Wittgenstein with Kant, Toulmin writes:

His (Wittgenstein's) central philosophical preoccupations, too, are intelligible (I would argue) only against a Kantian backcloth. Like Kant and Schopenhauer before him, Wittgenstein was eventually preoccupied with the notion of intellectual 'bounds' or 'limits', and with the impulse of the human mind to transcend them. In his arguments Kant's fundamental questions about the scope and limits of reason (*Vernunft*),

which had been transformed by Schopenhauer into questions about the scope and limits of representation (*Vorstellung*), were converted once again into questions about the scope and limits of language (*Sprache*).[10]

But Toulmin adds:

In private conversation with Waismann, Wittgenstein talked about these limits (*Grenze*) and about the human impulse to over-run them (*an die Grenze der Sprache anzurennen*), in terms which he explicitly compared with Kierkegaard and Heidegger, and which have clear affiliations with the whole tradition of 'critical' or 'transcendental' analysis founded by Kant, and continued throughout all subsequent German philosophy. In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein evidently believed that the scope and limits of language – which were also the scope of the intellect, or of thought – could be mapped definitely by applying the techniques and symbolism of Russell's propositional calculus. As the 1920's went on – and especially after 1927, when he began regular discussions with Schlick and Waismann – he gradually lost this confidence. Whereas he had earlier taken for granted the existence of some direct *Verbindung der Sprache und der Wirklichkeit*, he now acknowledged that some more explicit account was required of the relations between language and the world.[11]

Two questions must be considered by any reader of the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*: What is the point of mapping out the foundations, or limits, of human knowledge? What are the consequences of a non-foundational approach to the problems of philosophy and the sciences? It will be argued that both Hegel and Wittgenstein rejected the foundational approach and, as a result, numerous parallels can be drawn between their mature works. Of particular concern will be the move from a critique of language (*Tractatus*) to a description of its use (*Blue and Brown Books*, and *Philosophical Investigations*) by Wittgenstein, which is in many ways parallel to the move from a Kantian critique of reason to Hegel's phenomenological description of the various shapes of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*. Equally important is the movement, by both Wittgenstein and Hegel, from the concept of knowledge as a passive property to the concept of knowledge as an activity to be described as it appears. A study of the Introduction promises, therefore, to provide an understanding of the consequences of rejecting the foundation and edifice theory of knowledge. This should throw light on the differences between Hegel and his predecessors, and also between Wittgenstein's earlier and later writings.

2. WHAT IS THE POINT OF MAPPING OUT THE FOUNDATIONS, OR LIMITS, OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE?

According to the foundationalist, unless a limit was drawn there would be nothing to prevent those metaphysical flights of fancy

which, from time to time, have showered discredit upon the activity of philosophy. Fear of metaphysical extravagance has led many philosophers to apply a limit to the wanderings of the human mind. Kant held that experience could provide that limit, and likened those who thought they could operate more easily with concepts outside the limits of experience to 'the light dove, who cleaving the air in her free flight, and feeling its resistance might imagine that its flight would be still easier in empty space'.[12] Similarly, Wittgenstein compared the metaphysician to one who had stepped onto 'slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk,' he added, 'so we need friction. Back to the rough ground' (PI.107).

Does this mean that, once the limits are fixed, philosophers should abandon the attempt to obtain what Hegel calls 'the actual knowledge of what truly is' – putting out of their minds all puzzlement about the nature of being, reality, and absolute knowledge? Many of Wittgenstein's successors have indeed given up this attempt, concerning themselves solely with the dissolution of philosophical problems, tidying up linguistic or conceptual confusions. This emphasis upon 'philosophic-aversion therapy' lends a certain justification to the question of whether it might be more efficient to invent a pill to cure philosophers of their metaphysical cravings. There is much in Wittgenstein's writings to support this activity, but this would be to misunderstand the nature of philosophy as well as the positive side of Wittgenstein's contribution.

It is true that Wittgenstein saw philosophical questions as the product of certain misconceptions about language (PI.116), and therefore sought to place limits on speculative fantasies. But, like Hegel, he realised that they raised very important questions from which many advances in human knowledge derive their impetus. (Even in the *Tractatus*, where the limit of language was clearly defined, the importance of what lay beyond this limit was never ignored.) To be puzzled over the nature of absolute knowledge, God, being, immortality, human freedom, life, and so on may be due to certain misleading associations, but unless we have such cravings (including the 'craving for generality' denounced in the *Blue Book*, p. 17), there would be no knowledge at all. The popular assumption that Wittgenstein directed his efforts solely towards the removal of misleading pictures can blind his readers to the importance of such pictures in the attainment of human knowledge. To deny the relevance of philosophical perplexity is to misunderstand the nature of

the relationship between philosophy and the various sciences. Consider, for example, how certain mathematical statements have given rise to philosophical perplexity, but without this perplexity advances within mathematics would not have been made. Says Wittgenstein:

> Certain verbal forms are misleading for a time and then cease to be misleading. The idea of imaginary numbers, e.g. There may have been something misleading in this when it was first introduced but now it is utterly harmless; it just does not mislead anyone, while to say that the appellation 'infinite development' is misleading is correct. though of course it does not mislead anyone in his calculations. It misleads in the idea of what they have done and the consequent interest which people have in certain calculations. The idea of the infinite as something huge does fascinate some people and this interest is due solely to that association, though they probably would not admit it. But that has nothing to do with their calculations. We could, e.g., play chess without the board or chessmen, by description of the moves, etc. I might say that chess would have never been invented apart from the board, figures, etc., and perhaps the connection with the movement of troops in battle. No one would have dreamed of inventing the game as played with pencil and paper. That would be right, but still the game (as played either way) would not be wrong. It is the same with mathematics. There is nothing right or wrong in a calculus, but it is the associations which make it seem worthwhile. But they are quite different from the calculus. Sometimes the associations are connected with practical applications; sometimes they are not. The association with the infinite is with something huge. Without this association no one would care a damn about the infinite.[13]

Wittgenstein's point is that the sciences are permeated with philosophical questions which enjoy a different logical status to other questions arising within each science. For example, mathematicians, argues Wittgenstein, have been puzzled over the nature of the infinite and have sometimes conceived it in terms of a large number. Against this view, Wittgenstein would argue that the infinite is not a number at all, but the expression of a rule which allows one to say 'I can go on'. But unless people saw the infinite as puzzling, there would never have been any strides in the history of mathematics. True, the infinitesimal calculus does not tell us anything about infinitesimal objects, but puzzlement about infinitesimal objects has led to mathematical developments. A similar case can be made concerning the relationship between philosophy and other sciences. Philosophical perplexity concerning the nature of matter, life, energy, soul, and mind has been the driving force behind scientific discovery.[14]

To be sure, the sciences do not answer the philosopher's questions – though developments in the sciences may remove some of his puzzlement – for he is concerned with the nature of reality, which belongs to another dimension of human experience.[15] And,

according to Hegel, philosophical puzzlement is not satisfied with empirical findings, because the former belong to an infinite sphere of human experience:

> In its own field this empirical knowledge may at first give satisfaction; but in two ways it is seen to come about. In the first place there is another circle of objects which it does not embrace. These are freedom, spirit, and God. They belong to a different sphere, not because it can be said that they have nothing to do with experience; for though they are certainly not experiences of the senses, it is quite an identical proposition to say that whatever is in consciousness is experienced. The real ground for assigning them to another field of cognition is that in their scope and *content* these objects evidently show themselves as infinite. (Enz.I.8)

Hegel is not putting forward an argument for a strict demarcation between philosophy and the sciences. On the contrary, he argues very strongly that philosophy 'owes its development to the empirical sciences', and in return 'it gives their contents what is so vital to them, the freedom of thought, – gives them, in short, an *a priori* character' (Enz.I.12). His account of the relationship between the respective 'spheres' of philosophy and the empirical sciences can be understood with reference to R. Bambrough's use of the analogy between pure and applied science.[16] Whilst they are logically independent of each other, says Bambrough, they are not mutually irrelevant. So, he argues, with philosophy the application of the propositions of pure philosophy is logically distinct, but not irrelevant to the propositions of 'applied philosophy'. Hegel's point about philosophy giving an *a priori* character to the empirical sciences is aptly illustrated in the following remark by Bambrough:

> The techniques and the results of the pure philosophy are also capable of being applied to the treatment of non-philosophical questions. The pure *a priori* principles that are elicited and enunciated by the pure philosopher are the principles which are used by thinkers about non-philosophical questions: by scientists and historians and moralists and theologians and critics.
>
> The most striking cases of the application of the methods and principles of pure philosophy to the treatment of non-philosophical questions are found in the work of radical innovators who are reassessing and calling into question the most fundamental concepts of their own disciplines. Freud was concerned with questions about the nature of the human mind. His study was an empirical study, a study of the actual, of man as he is. But in the course of pursuing this study he found it useful to reflect on the *a priori* philosophical questions 'What is a wish?' or 'What is the unconscious state of mind?' or 'Is it conceivable that there should be such a thing as an unconscious state of mind?' When he reflected on these and similar questions he was reflecting philosophically: he was not only using the techniques of the philosopher, but using them on questions that belong to pure philosophy. But he was doing philosophy with a view to making progress in psychology, as the engineer and the physicist do mathematics with a view to solving problems or making discoveries in engineering or physics.[17]

The relationship between philosophy and the empirical sciences has given rise to much confusion in philosophy. Propositions belonging to the sphere of 'pure philosophy' have often been misconstrued as statements of empirical fact. We might say that Kant's *Critique* and much of Wittgenstein's writings represent an attempt to show where metaphysicians had mistakenly thought their utterances to be scientific. (This is not to be confused with the positivist attempt to consign metaphysics to the flames, since positivism itself entails many dubious metaphysical assumptions.) Kant, especially, saw the *Critique* as a preliminary to giving satisfactory answers to metaphysical questions such as the justification for belief in God; the nature of human freedom, immortality, and the good life. One might say that the need to resolve genuine philosophical problems justifies the critical approach: those who see the destruction of philosophy in a critique have missed the point of philosophy.

We can see, then, how the 'mapping out' of the bounds of human knowledge can serve to emphasise either that which lies within the boundary or without. The latter, the metaphysical (or ethical), can be just as important from the standpoint of the critique. This is why Wittgenstein considered that his most important work was unwritten.[18] His own puzzlement, in the *Tractatus*, concerning the nature of the good life (6.421), immortality (6.4311), the 'why of the world' (6.44), the problem of life (6.52), and even the propositions of the critique itself (6.54), was considered unsayable.

The *Tractatus* was, broadly speaking, an attempt to undertake, in the manner of Kant, a once and for all critique of language. Language was examined instead of thought in order to avoid any 'inessential psychological investigations',[19] but in both cases the objects under investigation were the conditions for the attainment of human knowledge. Having examined the conditions of knowledge, one could then decide what could be done with them.

The answer to the initial question, in this section, must be that the point of a foundational approach can only be to provide the conditions believed necessary for the isolation of the philosophical sphere of experience. In Hegel's terms, this would be 'the attainment of' absolute knowledge.

Before answering our second question – What are the consequences of rejecting a foundational approach? – we must understand why Hegel rejected it. It is necessary, however, to anticipate some of Hegel's conclusions in order to understand how he undermines the foundational approach, since he is at an advantage over his reader, having already recognised the consequences of his rejection before presenting it in its publishable form. Hegel was the first

philosopher to question the intelligibility of a critique, and to reject the assumption that the foundations of human knowledge, or indeed any of the sciences, could be examined as a precursor to their active employment. Like the later Wittgenstein, Hegel saw human knowledge as an activity to be described, as it appears, rather than a passive object to be examined in isolation from its content. Hegel's method is therefore descriptive, and how better can one begin a descriptive method than with a phenomenological account of the above-mentioned assumptions of Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, and Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*? The Introduction is not an introduction to a system, still less a synopsis of an alleged dialectical method. There can be no introduction to a purely descriptive phenomenology of human consciousness, just as there can be no introduction to experience.[20] Instead, the Introduction, in keeping with the method employed throughout the subsequent chapters, is an attempt to take seriously the kind of assertions with which philosophers have usually prefaced their works.[21] If this is the case, then what is the point of writing an Introduction? Why not simply begin with the first chapter?

3. WHAT IS THE POINT OF AN INTRODUCTION?

The Introduction marks a break with the traditional ritual of examining the foundations of knowledge. Hegel suggests that consciousness stands in an immediate relation to its object – in the case of philosophy, the absolute. The purpose of the Introduction is therefore to break down the artificial distinctions between knowledge and its object. The natural state of man, implies Hegel, is to be in the presence of the absolute. This is a condition of there being any knowledge at all, since philosophical puzzlement is bound up with advances in the various systems of knowledge and is concerned with the nature of absolute knowledge. This is not to say that philosophy is, in some way, a foundation for the sciences. Philosophical puzzlement only occurs when a considerable body of knowledge is already established. Absolute knowledge, the object of philosophy, is a presupposition of the various sciences. For this reason, we cannot be introduced to a means of taking hold of it any more than we can be introduced to language, which is itself both a product and a condition of scientific development.

What is the traditional conception of the absolute? As we have seen in the remarks of Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, and Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, if the absolute is not nonsense to be

put out of mind, it is something that can be approached after a critique of human knowledge, or language. We must therefore consider Hegel's description of these assumptions held by critical philosophy.

4. THE LOGICAL CIRCLE OF CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Critical philosophy involves a distinction between the means of knowing and what is known. This arises from a desire to be certain that what emerges will be the truth. The trouble with this procedure is that the critique itself claims to be knowledge; that is, something which we can know. If we can only achieve this knowledge by an act of knowledge, then how can we examine the primary act of knowledge? How can we examine the cognitive faculty? In *The Logic of Hegel*, he expresses the problem as follows:

> A main line of argument in the Critical Philosophy bids us pause before proceeding to inquire into God or into the true being of things, and tells us first of all to examine the faculty of cognition and see whether it is equal to such an effort. We ought, says Kant, to become acquainted with the instrument before we undertake the work for which it is to be employed; for if the instrument be insufficient, all our trouble will be spent in vain. The plausibility of this suggestion has won for it general assent and admiration; the result of which has been to withdraw cognition from an interest in its objects and absorbtion in the study of them, and to direct it back upon itself; and so turn it into a question of form. Unless we wish to be deceived by words, it is easy to see what this amounts to. In the case of other instruments, we can try to criticise them in other ways than by setting about the special work for which they are destined. But the examination of knowledge can only be carried out by an act of knowledge. To examine this so-called instrument is the same thing as to know it. But to seek to know before we know is as absurd as the wise resolution of Scholasticus, not to venture into the water until he had learned to swim. (Enz. I.10)

Every consistent foundational epistemology is trapped in this logical circle from the beginning. The critique of knowledge, as Habermas says, does not possess the spontaneity of an origin; it is condemned to being after the fact.[22] As such, there are no first principles, whether ultimates of sense or the self-defining cogito, but this does not mean that knowledge cannot be made a subject for analysis. Indeed, Hegel even considers that a 'very important step' was taken 'when the terms of the old metaphysic were subject to scrutiny' (Enz.I.41.Zu.). The Kantian demand for a criticism of the faculty of cognition as a preliminary to its exercise, Hegel regarded as a 'fair demand if it meant that even the forms of thought must be made an object of investigation' (Enz.I.41.Zu.).[23] Unfortunately, 'there soon creeps in the misconception of knowing before you

know – the error of refusing to enter the water until you have learnt to swim. True indeed, the forms of thought should be subjected to a scrutiny before they are used: yet what is this scrutiny but *ipso facto* a cognition' (Enz.I.41.Zu.). The error lies in conceiving of the faculty of cognition as a distinct entity which can be examined in its passive state, as a 'preliminary to its exercise' (Enz.I.41.Zu.). That is to say, foundational epistemology conceives of an external distinction between means (cognition) and ends (knowledge).

One of Hegel's points is that foundational epistemology has failed to grasp how, in an important sense, knowledge is bound up with certain activities, and it is for this reason that it cannot be examined as a 'preliminary to its exercise'. Consider the type of distinction Ryle has drawn between 'knowing how' and 'knowing that'. Knowing how to swim, for instance, is different to knowing that the swimming-baths open at 9.30 A.M., the depth of the water, and so on. One cannot sit down and record all the things that one knows, since very often the criterion of knowledge is bound to performance. Hegel's criticism of foundational epistemology therefore ushers in a new concept of knowledge: if knowledge is bound to performance, then an examination of the faculties of cognition, as á preliminary to their exercise, is impossible. This touches on a fundamental difference between Hegel and Kant. It is true that, for Kant, unlike Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, cognition was an active process – this can be seen in his arguments concerning the 'unity of apperception'. But Hegel's point is that in certain respects knowledge is creative, and cannot be assessed apart from performance. Kant, however, held that whilst knowing was an activity, the faculties which perform this activity could be examined independently, and 'knowing before you know' could therefore be equivalent to knowing the possibilities before the actual event, or knowing the rule prior to its application. This Hegel denied, since in those cases where knowing is bound to performance, the criterion for knowing always follows the deed. This anti-foundational approach found expression in Goethe:

> Tis writ, 'In the beginning was the Word'.
> I pause, to wonder what is here inferred.
> The Word I cannot set supremely high:
> A new translation will I try.
> I read, if by the Spirit I am taught,
> This sense: 'In the beginning was the Thought'.
> This opening I need weigh again,
> Or sense may suffer from a hasty pen.

Does Thought create, and work rule the hour,
'Twere best: 'In the beginning was the Power'.
Yet, while the pen is urged with willing fingers,
A sense of doubt and hesitancy lingers.
The spirit comes to guide me in my need,
I write, 'In the beginning was the Deed'.

(*Faust*, I)[24]

One may examine a person's intention to swim the Channel, and we can examine his physical fitness, but whether he knows how to swim the Channel can only be determined by reference to his actual performance. Whereas Kant attempted to analyse the contents of cognition before their employment, Hegel demanded that we

> combine in our process of inquiry the action of the forms of thought with a criticism of them. The forms of thought must be studied in their essential nature and complete development: they are at once the object of research and the action of that object. (Enz.I.41.Zu.)

The logical circle of 'knowing before you know' does not imply that we cannot examine and criticise what is allegedly known. If that were the case, anything would count as a truth and we would merely repeat the mistakes of the pre-Kantian metaphysicians. Contrary to what many commentators hold, Hegel's rejection of the Kantian critique was not an attempt to resurrect pre-Kantian metaphysics or unlimited rationalism.[25] Instead the emphasis of criticism falls not on the structure of the cognitive faculties, but rather on the action of knowledge as it expresses itself in the world. The logical circle applies only to attempts to measure and evaluate the foundations of knowledge from an external standpoint.

5. REINHOLD'S ATTEMPT TO BREAK THE LOGICAL CIRCLE: DYNAMIC FOUNDATIONS

One might think that the circularity of 'knowing before you know' can be avoided by conceding that the critique begins with presuppositions which are primarily problematic, but in principle can be verified by subsequent investigation. This 'problematic' method, originally adopted by Reinhold,[26] is still very popular in Popperian circles. This version does not advocate that all its principles are problematic. On the contrary, the set of presuppositions which defines the frame of reference of a given investigation should be assumed as unproblematic during the course of the investigation.

But then the logical circle returns: How do we know which principles we are to consider as unproblematic? What standard do we employ? Sir Karl Popper stands in a similar position to Reinhold when, after rejecting the concept of absolute foundations, he opts for dynamic foundations. And like Reinhold, he is wedded to the foundation and edifice theory of knowledge:

> The empirical basis of objective science has thus nothing 'absolute' about it. Science does not rest upon solid bedrock. The bold structure of its theories rises, as it were, above a swamp. It is like a building erected on piles. The piles are driven down from above into the swamp, but not down to any natural or 'given' base; and if we stop driving the piles deeper, it is not because we have reached firm ground. We simply stop when we are satisfied that they are firm enough to carry the structure, at least for the time being.[27]

Dynamic foundations, however, do not eliminate the regress into the logical circle of 'knowing before you know'. The piles sunk into the swamp, which, according to Popper, are analogous to 'basic statements', are the foundations upon which the edifice of knowledge may rest. It is true, he admits, that they can shift; they are dynamic foundations. But, as in the case of the building on the swamp, we can only know whether the foundations are secure by reference to the size of the building which is to be erected upon them. Taking Popper's view seriously, we can know nothing of the building until the foundations are laid, since the foundations determine what can be built on them. But the foundations – which are to give us knowledge of the type of building we can have – require a certain amount of knowledge of the building before we can decide whether they are adequate to lay the first brick on them. Similarly, with science and knowledge: basic statements, however dynamic, require some reference to that which is to hang on them. This is what Wittgenstein means when he says:

> It is not single axioms that strike me as obvious; it is a system in which consequences and premises give one another *mutual* support. (OC.142)

Hegel's treatment of the 'problematic' method, however, consists of an application of its inherent scepticism to accounts of the emergence of knowledge. Every foundationalist theory of knowledge betrays a lack of confidence in unfounded statements, so taking this view seriously, Hegel questions the convention of assigning some statements as unproblematic. Why these and not others? A critique aimed at the whole compass of human knowledge has no justification for sparing some statements, unless it has some prior knowledge. In which case the logical circle reappears. For this reason, argues Hegel, Reinhold's 'hypothetical and problematic' method does not

escape the logical circle of 'knowing before you know'; his correct insight into epistemology's circularity 'does not alter the character of the method', says Hegel, 'it only makes clear its imperfections' (Enz.I.10).

6. THE FEAR OF ERROR

> The pursuit of the incorrigible is one of the most venerable bugbears in the history of philosophy. (J.L. Austin)[28]

If, as Hegel argues, the critique of the foundations of knowledge is circular, does it follow that giving up the attempt to determine the foundations should entail giving up the critical method altogether? Surely the critical philosopher has only to abandon the circular position of claiming knowledge before it is achieved? The problem arising from the critical method, however, is that there is no limit to the radical scepticism which is built into the attempt to construct a critique of human knowledge. How is it to get started when we cannot discover a principle, or standard, which is not subject to scrutiny and doubt? This is the kind of position that Wittgenstein was thinking of when he asked:

> If the shopkeeper wanted to investigate each of his apples without any reason, for the sake of being certain about everything, why doesn't he have to investigate the investigation? (OC.459)

Cannot all standards be treated as arbitrary in the absence of the initial knowledge necessary to establish them? According to Hegel, the presence of scepticism affects the whole epistemological approach:

> If concern about falling into error makes one in the meanwhile distrustful of science, which goes to work and actually knows without any such hesitations, then one should not overlook the possibility of reversing this procedure by placing distrust in this very distrust and becoming concerned about another question: Is not the fear of error already the error itself? In fact this fear presupposes a great deal as truth; its hesitations and inferences are based on an assumption whose claim to truth is yet to be examined. (PG.MM.69/B.132–33)

If critical philosophy is to be taken seriously, the presuppositions built into the critique must be subjected to radical doubt. Thus, if the critical philosopher adopts a principle of mistrust, then this principle cannot be limited. If all standards must be examined, we must be prepared to include the principle of scepticism entailed by this programme of criticism.

From the standpoint of philosophy, as we have noted, the purpose

of a critique is to determine whether consciousness can even take hold of the absolute. In the above quotation, the term 'science' must be taken to refer to philosophy. When Hegel says that science 'actually knows without any such hesitations', he is hinting at a distinction between the science of philosophy, which has an internal relation to its object (the absolute), and the other sciences, whose object may be externally related. To rush in without any examination of the means of taking hold of the truth is, in any other science, to run the risk of error. Unless the telescope is examined from time to time, we cannot have certain knowledge concerning the astronomer's observations. But we can only speak of error when we have some knowledge of the object; we can only know whether the telescope is wrong if we have independent knowledge of the phenomena observed by it. In the case of philosophy, to speak of error would presuppose an independent knowledge of the absolute. Yet this is precisely what is denied by those who suggest an examination of the means in order to avoid erroneous speculation about the absolute. Thus the error committed, in this case, is the 'fear of error itself'.

The mistaken assumption, at which Hegel's reference to 'knowing without hesitation' is directed, is of an absolute that stands on one side – out there – independent of the means of taking hold of it,

> but above all, it presupposes that the absolute *stands on one side* and that *knowledge*, though it is *on the other side*, for itself and separated from the absolute, is nevertheless something real. (PG.MM.70/B.133)

The distinction between knowledge and the absolute, claims Hegel, rests on an unwarranted dogmatism. Knowledge of the absolute is not determined by the application of a critique, since any critique which ruled out the possibility of such knowledge could always be rejected as inadequate. Ironically, the only critique exempt from further criticism is that which confirms the possibility of absolute knowledge. This can be illustrated by reference to certain problems concerning the existence of viruses. Before the invention of the electron microscope in the 1940s, there were no adequate means of observing them, which placed considerable strain on the intelligibility of speaking of living agents no larger than some chemical molecules. Nevertheless there were scientists who became convinced of the existence of viruses, and the failure to observe them by means of the conventional microscope served only to reveal its inadequacy for the task. The virus 'paradigm', we might say, was too deeply entrenched for it to be refuted by observations based on the conventional microscope. On the other hand, scientists were

willing to accept the evidence of the electron microscope, which revealed that viruses were from half to a quarter the size of a wavelength of violet light, which, incidentally, explained why the conventional microscope was inadequate. But by that time so much was known about their shape and size that nothing new was revealed.[29] In short, the idea of viruses as living agents was such that the only observational criterion acceptable to the scientists was that which confirmed their hypothesis.

It is the same with a critique designed to prove whether or not absolute knowledge lies beyond the limits of human attainment. A critique which argues that the absolute lies beyond the limits of knowledge can always be dismissed as unsatisfactory, since it is always possible that someone will develop the appropriate methods for taking hold of it. Ultimately, the only unproblematic critique is that which acknowledges the reality of the absolute and can be independently tested by reference to knowledge of the absolute. But this presupposes that the absolute is already known. So when Hegel suggests that 'science knows without hesitations', he is hinting that the absolute is present all the time – a precursor of the conclusion of the *Phenomenology*, where the absolute pervades all knowledge.

7. THE ORGANON THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE: KNOWLEDGE AS A MEDIUM OR INSTRUMENT

Critical philosophy, as we have observed, assumes the intervention of the means of knowing between consciousness and what it knows. Hegel's next move is to develop the nature of this assumption. To those who adhere to the assumptions of critical philosophy, cognition is assumed to be an organon, or instrument, in Aristotle's sense. To break the hold of this picture, Hegel seizes on a metaphor beloved by epistemologists: knowledge is mediated, either by an instrument or a medium; the former shaping what is known, the latter serving as a filter for what is received from the outside. What both views hold in common is the assumption of an intervening factor between the knowing subject and its knowledge. Hegel's point, however, is that once we take seriously the idea that cognition stands between consciousness and the absolute, then any form of knowledge will prove inadequate to its task. This implies that any attempt to know the absolute, on these terms, will prove to be an absurd undertaking: an objection which applies to both conceptions of knowledge as an instrument or medium.

The metaphor of an instrument suggests that knowledge is something employed and manipulated, whilst the metaphor of a medium suggests that it is passively received. Both are held to affect the knowledge actually received. Neither forms an adequate means of cognition equal to the knowledge sought, since their contribution somehow prevents one from grasping the absolute as it is:

> For if knowledge is the instrument to take hold of the absolute essence, one is immediately reminded that the application of an instrument to a thing does not leave the thing as it is, but brings about a shaping and alteration to it. Or if knowledge is not an instrument for our activity, but a more or less passive medium through which the light of truth reaches us, then again we do not receive this truth as it is in itself, but as it is in and through this medium. (PG.MM.68/B.131)

Hegel is here characterising the critical philosopher as one who attempts an examination of the instrument or medium in order to distinguish its contribution from what is derived objectively from the 'external world'. In other words, critical philosophy must try to eliminate the contribution of the instrument or medium in order to discover the absolute in itself.

We can illustrate this point with the following examples:

A. The examination of knowledge as an instrument is akin to the examination of an instrument with which one obtains knowledge of various phenomena in the sciences. Consider a scientist who has isolated a single organism on a laboratory slide. He observes it through his microscope in order to discover certain facts about it, but his knowledge of the organism will be incomplete in one important respect, since the artificial conditions of the laboratory constitute a limitation on his knowledge of the organism. The instrument, seen as a means of obtaining knowledge, also contributes to and distorts the object; instead of a living organism, freely interacting with its environment, the scientist observes a laboratory artefact. If the scientist were one who subscribed to the views of critical philosophy, he might think that a perfect knowledge of the organism can only be obtained if, somehow, the contribution of his instruments is deducted. But the instruments, we remind him, are the only means by which the organism is known. Likewise with the absolute: to eliminate the instrument is to exclude the possibility of knowledge of the absolute. This position is unavoidable if one maintains that philosophical knowledge and its object are externally related.

B. If one holds the metaphor of knowledge as a medium, the problem is similar. Consider how the argument from illusion operates. The student is first shown a stick, which appears bent, in a bucket of water. This 'appearance' is explained in terms of laws of refraction

bound up with the intervening medium of water. The next stage is to persuade the student, by analogy, that we have no certain means of discovering the real shape of the stick in what are so-called 'normal' conditions, since there still remains the medium constituted by the cognitive faculties. The inquiry is then shifted towards a search for 'things as they really are', without any interference from the medium.

Hegel's objections to this practice are as follows:

> If we remove from a formed thing what the instrument has done to it, then the thing – in this case the absolute – is once again just what it was before this obviously superfluous effort. . . . Or if the examination of knowing, which we represent to ourselves as a *medium*, makes us acquainted with the law of light refraction in the *medium*, it is likewise useless to subtract this factor from the result. For knowledge is not the refraction of the ray, but rather it is the ray of light itself; if this be subtracted, we would be left with no more than an indication of pure direction or empty place. (PG.MM.69/B.132)

The point of Hegel's objection is that the absolute is not something apart from, and independent of, the activities in which we are said to possess knowledge. This was already hinted at in a sub-clause when he said that the absolute is not mediated by a means but is 'in and for itself, already close to us of its own accord' (PG.MM.69/B.132).[30] For in the case of philosophy, and indeed the other sciences too, the means of knowing is internally related to the absolute. Critical philosophy is therefore faulted for having a theory of knowledge dependent upon the assumption of subjective conditions which act as an intervening medium between the knower and the absolute, distorting one's view of the latter. This can, and often does, lead to a lack of interest in the absolute and a turning away from the problems of philosophy towards a study of the mechanics of the cognitive faculties – or language, if the critique is of language rather than thought – the province of psychology or linguistics. 'For nothing,' as Hume says, 'is more certain, than that despair has the same effect upon us as enjoyment, and that we are no sooner acquainted with the impossibility of satisfying any desire than the desire itself vanishes. When we see that we have arrived at the utmost extent of human reason, we sit down contented.'[31]

The critical philosopher, however, does not have to concede that the organon distorts knowledge, since he can retain the above assumptions, admitting, as Kant does, that there is no concept of knowledge that can be arrived at without recourse to the subjective faculties. All knowledge is, in this way, ultimately subjective, as shown by the Kantian principle of the synthetic unity of apperception. So when the critical philosopher treats knowledge as something

mediated by an instrument or medium, he implies that the conditions in which knowledge is possible are determined by the instrument or medium. According to this account of critical philosophy, the organon – being either a medium or instrument – actually produces the world within which reality can appear. As such, it can be argued that the organon does not conceal knowledge – on the contrary, it discloses it. This argument is put forward by Habermas, who argues that it now appears that Hegel is wrong to say that critical philosophy 'presupposes that the absolute stands on one side and that knowledge, though it is on the other side, for itself and separated from the absolute, is nevertheless something real' (PG.MM.70/B.133). For here, says Habermas, Hegel is accusing the critical philosopher of postulating an absolute relation between the knowing subject and its object in which a mediating organon can only be seen as a means of distorting what is known. Hegel, he says, is operating on the principle that knowledge and the absolute are one, but the critical philosopher can reply that this need not be so, since what is known is created by the organon and anything outside the limits of the organon is unknowable, or as Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* would say, unsayable. This, as we have argued, is not to say that knowledge of the absolute is meaningless: both Kant and Wittgenstein, for example, recognised its importance; the former examining reason to make room for faith, the latter acknowledging the 'depth' of man's urge to 'transcend the limits of language'. But both placed the absolute outside the range of rational inquiry and, as such, cannot be criticised from a standpoint which presupposes its attainment.

But is Hegel operating from a meta-standpoint which presupposes the attainment of absolute knowledge? Referring to the above argument that the organon creates reality rather than obscures it, Habermas concludes:

> Only presupposing that reality as such simply appears can this or that individual real element be obscured – unless we presume an absolute relation between reality and the cognitive process that is independent of that instrument. But from the presuppositions of transcendental philosophy we cannot even meaningfully talk of knowledge without identifying the conditions of possible knowledge. Accordingly Hegel's critique does not proceed immanently. For his objection to the organon theory of knowledge presupposes just what this theory calls into question: the possibility of absolute knowledge.[32]

However, in Hegel's defence it must be pointed out that Hegel was not arguing from meta-standpoint. This is to misunderstand the nature of the absolute and Hegel's phenomenological method. His argument was that absolute knowledge (philosophy) is bound up with any system of knowledge, and that critical philosophy itself

presupposes knowledge of the absolute when it places it outside the range of the organon. (For what is the criterion for determining the extent of the organon other than the presupposition of absolute knowledge?) Hegel does not presuppose absolute knowledge himself; he only has to expose the metaphysical assumptions of critical philosophy. And his faulting of critical philosophy requires no standards other than those employed by the critical philosopher himself, as we shall see in the following section.

8. THE PRESUPPOSITIONS OF CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Hegel's criticism of the critical philosophy is ultimately justified because he can point to certain unfounded presuppositions within the critical method, upon which rests the standard for determining the bounds of sense/limits of language. Both Kant and Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* assumed that the world could be represented in only one way, and accordingly they sought the standard for determining the correctness of this representation. This is precisely the issue Hegel seizes upon. The critical philosopher has definite ideas about the nature of his critique. How are they justified? Kant himself said a great deal about the organisation of the cognitive faculty as the essential unity of the transcendental conditions under which language has sense; but by what right did he specify these conditions?

Both Wittgenstein and Kant specified these conditions by *a priori* means, and in doing so revealed an affection for a particular prototype of knowledge.

A. *Wittgenstein*

Wittgenstein, for instance, assumed that the ultimate standard lay in a similarity of structure between that which pictures and that which is pictured. Accordingly there was only one logical form of language. A critique of language placed the traditional metaphysical subjects of God, the Soul, and so on, outside the limit of language. Even the critique itself lay outside the limit of what could be said. Language, argued Wittgenstein, can no more describe its own essence than it can describe the essence of that which it pictures.

As Russell states, however, in his Introduction to the *Tractatus*:

> What causes hesitation is the fact that, after all, Mr. Wittgenstein manages to say a good deal about what cannot be said, thus suggesting to the sceptical reader that possibly there may be some loophole through a hierarchy of language. (TLP.p.xxi)

To meet this objection, Wittgenstein conceded that the whole programme consists in saying the unsayable, but this he justified on the grounds that his 'elucidations' must be used and discarded, like a ladder one must throw away after scaling it (TLP.6.54).

Wittgenstein, however, was to express dissatisfaction with this transcendental standpoint, though at the time of writing the *Tractatus* he had no reservations in this respect. The transcendental nature of the *Tractatus* 'elucidations' is bound to the famous 'picture theory', which states that only genuine propositions are those which have truth poles. The proof of this claim, however, does not have truth poles and therefore lies outside the realm of genuine discourse. The picture theory can only be justified on transcendental grounds, and assumptions that language has a self-evident *Verbindung* with reality.[33] Accordingly, language could be examined by *a priori* means in a once and for all attempt to determine its essence. But as the whole thing rests on a transcendental base, by what right does it assert superiority over other equally transcendental theories?

As Miss Anscombe points out, the *Tractatus* theory, if true, would be the death of natural theology because the propositions of the latter are held to be true in such a way as to deny the possibility of the truth of their opposite.[34] Equally, it could be said that from the standpoint of natural theology the *Tractatus* theory is invalid, since it can be contradicted by the self-evident truths of natural theology. Who is correct? What we have is a clash of standards, neither of which has the right to the claim of obvious truth. This may be the way in which knowledge does manifest itself but, if so, we cannot give much weight to a critique of its foundations, since we have nothing at the base but unfounded presuppositions.

In a very important sense, any other coherent metaphysical system could reject the *Tractatus* on the grounds that it does not accord with certain transcendental truths of its own. This is Hegel's point in arguing that critical philosophy presupposes certain standards whose validity is problematic if one adopts a critical approach. When the critical philosopher seeks to rule out another system of knowledge as nonsensical (e.g. natural theology from the standpoint of the 'picture theory'), by what right, asks Hegel, other than the force of his assurance, does he claim to have proved the other to be nonsensical?

> For science cannot simply reject an untrue form of knowledge as a merely common view of things and give assurance that it is a completely different way of knowing, to which the other knowledge is of no significance whatever. Nor can it refer to the intimation of a better knowledge within that other. By giving this *assurance* it would

declare that its force resides in its *being*; but the untrue knowledge also appeals to the fact that *it is*, and gives assurance that to it science is nothing – *one* barren assurance carries as much weight as another. (PG.MM.71/B.134–35)

B. *Kant*

Kant, too, based his critique on standards which he held to be unproblematic. In particular, he held to a conception of scientific method popular from the time of Descartes – the principle of universal doubt – which Hegel expresses as

the *resolve* not to found science on authority, surrendering oneself to the thoughts of others, but rather to examine everything for oneself and follow only one's own convictions, or, better yet, to produce everything by oneself and hold one's own act to be true. (PG.MM.73/B.136)

From Descartes to Kant, the principle of doubt required no justification because it was held to be the very essence of the faculty of reason. For Descartes, the existence of the self was guaranteed by the ability to doubt. For Kant, nothing was more certain than the 'I think' which accompanied his representations.[35] Methodical doubt and the doubting self were intimately bound up with each other and were thus held to be unproblematic. The critique of knowledge was founded on a specific conception of science and the knowing subject. The ultimate court of appeal was to the knowing subject which possessed within itself the laws of reason. But, as Habermas points out: 'These are assertions claiming self-evidence that are no longer convincing today as basic assumptions of rationalism. Radical doubt that needs to be neither justified nor learned through practice is no longer conceded a transcendental role. At most it has a role in cognitive psychology.'[36] Nowadays the scientific method associated with methodical doubt is simply one more belief amongst others, but formerly it was seen as the ultimate standard of reason. In this way, the Kantian critique, basing itself upon a programme of methodical doubt, was seen by Hegel to rest on nothing more than a 'barren assurance', and Kant was faulted for elevating it to a transcendental certainty.

Now making methodical doubt the principle of the critique reveals that the key presupposition of critical philosophy is of a specific concept of science. As Habermas says:

From the very start the enterprise of a critique of pure speculative reason assumes the normative cogency of a *specific* category of knowledge. Presupposing that the statements of mathematics and contemporary physics are valid as reliable knowledge, the

critique of knowledge can take principles that have proved themselves in these processes of inquiry and use them to draw conclusions about the organisation of our cognitive faculty.[37]

This can be seen in the way Kant spoke of the 'sure mark of science' (where science means Newtonian science) against which we find Hegel arguing, in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, that the standards of mathematics and physics, which have proved themselves in their own fields, should not be used to provide the foundation for other areas of knowledge, least of all the organisation of the cognitive faculties. Kant, of course, was heavily influenced by the natural sciences, so much that he saw its methods to be transcendental and free from presuppositions. But, as Hegel argues, to achieve this freedom and to avoid the logical circle of 'knowing before you know', he must begin with an undemonstrated criterion of the transcendental validity of scientific judgments. This criterion, as we have seen, evoked from Hegel the comment that 'one barren assurance carries as much weight as another'.

Hegel is not saying that scientific methods are unwarranted. He is saying that they do not rest on transcendental base. Science itself is not barren – only the claim that a particular methodology, divorced from its content, is valid for all forms of knowledge. Because the critique must have no standard excused from examination, a scientific method, like any other standard, must not be employed before it is justified. Thus, taking the critique at its own word, using no standard other than the critique's own standard of methodical doubt, we (Hegel and his reader) are to refrain from any prejudgment about scientific truth. The method employed must be sceptical, and the critique must be used unsparingly against itself.

The path towards absolute knowledge, which is beginning to emerge from Hegel's account of critical philosophy, must embrace a total scepticism with regard to any foundations of knowledge. This is what Hegel has in mind when he says 'The road may thus be viewed as a way of doubt or, more properly, as the way of despair' (PG.MM.72/B.135). This scepticism, however, is derived from the critique itself. Hegel is bringing in no other standard than that derived from the critique. By taking the critique seriously, he is achieving the break with natural consciousness without having to invoke standards of his own. The standard he does seize upon, however, is the principle of radical doubt. Because the critique must have no standard excused from examination, none of the presuppositions of natural consciousness can be employed before their justification. Such a justification leads only to the logical circle of

'knowing before you know'. The alternative is to adopt a programme of radical scepticism, which will destroy the standpoint of critical philosophy.

Hegel does not attempt to avoid this scepticism; his purpose is only to describe. Unlike most philosophers, however, he sees in this very scepticism the possibility of achieving the required breach with natural consciousness. Scepticism is not a completely negative exercise. If the sceptic learns that those assumptions given as 'natural knowledge' are ultimately relative, then something positive will have been achieved. The sceptical route, or the 'highway of despair', as Hegel calls it, is the direction in which the understanding of absolute truth is attained. For it is through that

> scepticism which directs itself to the whole compass of phenomenological consciousness in its manifestations that Spirit becomes able, for the first time, to examine what truth is. For this scepticism brings about a despair over concepts, thoughts and opinions which are called natural, and it is of no consequence whether these notions are said to be one's own or others. (PG.MM.73/B.136)

The hold of natural consciousness is broken when it is realised that one can doubt (and by implication demand justification for) any theory which holds that one valid way of representing the world is superior to any other. So when Hegel applauds scepticism, it is not merely the scepticism of a Hume or a Descartes, but a scepticism directed at the presuppositions built into their epistemological and ontological theories. Which one can we believe, he asks, when each competing epistemology has as much worth as another? Only by asking this question does spirit, as Hegel says, become able 'to examine what truth is'. The truth lies not in some transcendental sphere, but is relative to the various means of determining it.

It is in this way that the critique becomes a weapon of its own destruction. The knowing consciousness, which is the object of the epistemologist's inquiry, has no built-in categories that can be examined as a precursor to their employment. Nor does it have access to an unproblematic standard of certainty. In a state of radical doubt, the critical consciousness is relegated to what Hegel describes as 'phenomenological knowledge'. The suspension of any favoured prototype of knowledge does not mean that one should lapse into the dogmatism of commonsense, or seek certainty in the existence of a knowing cogito. 'It matters little', says Hegel, 'whether one bases himself on the authority of others or on personal conviction; the only difference is the vanity peculiar to the latter' (PG.MM.73/B.136). The investigation and critical examination of the reality of human knowledge cannot take place without 'some presupposition which will serve as the fundamental standard of

measurement' (PG.MM.73/B.139). We therefore leave the critical consciousness ready to examine the various forms of knowledge but, ironically, 'where science will make its first appearance, neither science nor anything else has justified itself as the essence or as the in itself; and without some basic principle, it seems that an examination cannot take place' (PG.MM.75–76/B.139). Hegel's alternative to the foundational approach, in this way, has its genesis in the ruins of traditional epistemology. We must therefore pause to consider the alternatives to traditional epistemology before pursuing our investigation into Hegel's answer to the question 'What are the consequences of a non-foundational approach to the problems of philosophy and the sciences?'

9. NIETZSCHE'S ANSWER: PERSPECTIVISM AND THE DENIAL OF THE ABSOLUTE

The weakness of the critique as a preliminary to the attainment of absolute knowledge was astutely recognised by Nietzsche who, like Hegel, saw that a critique involves presuppositions which cannot be questioned without self-destruction:

> Deeply mistrustful of epistemological dogmas, I loved to look first out of one window and then out of another, keeping myself from immunising myself in them, for I considered this harmful – and finally, is it likely that a tool can criticise its own fitness? – What I paid attention to, rather, was that no epistemological scepticism or dogmatism ever came into being without ulterior motives, and that these doctrines decline in value as soon as one considers what really *forced* them into this position. Basic insight: Kant as well as Hegel or Schopenhauer – the sceptic–epochistic as well as historicizing or pessimistic – are of moral origin.[38]

Nietzsche appears to be using arguments similar to those used in Hegel's own attempt to bar entry into a theory of knowledge. He rightly argues that the organon model must ultimately collapse into an inability to define itself:

> One would have to *know* . . . what *certainty* is, what *knowledge* is, and so forth. But since we do *not* know this, a critique of the cognitive faculty is absurd. How could the instrument criticise itself, if it can use only *itself* for this critique? It cannot even define itself.[39]

But Nietzsche has a different motive for rejecting the critique than Hegel. The latter employed this argument to achieve a 'redirection of natural consciousness', and the rejection of a critique was the first step in his attempt to reveal the nature of absolute knowledge. It must therefore be distinguished from Nietzsche's application of the

argument to deny the possibility of genuine knowledge in the face of subjectivist interpretations. For example:

As long as the word 'knowledge' has any meaning at all, the world is knowable. But it can be *interpreted* differently; it does not have a meaning behind it, but inummerable meanings. – 'Perspectivism'. It is our needs *that interpret the world*; our instincts and their pro and con.[40]

As we can see, Nietzsche was unable to free himself from certain positivistic assumptions about the relationship between the world and human knowledge. The world is a collection of facts, which can be interpreted this way or that according to needs or instincts. How the world is independent of these needs is a mystery that can never be solved. So, by 'perspectivism', Nietzsche means only the particular subjective perspective based on needs and instincts.[41] Speaking of what he calls the 'objectivist aberration', he argues, from within his positivistic standpoint, against the possibility of ever attaining a genuine truth:

The aberration of philosophy comes from this: instead of seeing logic and the categories of reason as means to the adaption of the world to ends of utility (that is, 'in principle', for a useful *falsification*), man believe to possess in them the criterion of truth or reality. The 'criterion of truth' was in fact merely the *biological utility of such a system of falsification.* And since an animal species knows nothing more important than preserving itself, one may in fact speak of 'truth' here. The naiveté was only to take this anthropocentric idiosyncrasy as the *measure of things*, as the judge of 'real' and 'unreal' – in short, to make absolute what is conditioned.[42]

The attachment of truth is merely a biological convenience. As such, any claim to the truth will suffice as long as we can put forward some needs to justify it. In this way, Nietzsche's criticism of the organon theory of knowledge passes into the very kind of subjectivity and relativism that Hegel wished to avoid. Nietzsche's attempt to 'go beyond Kant' led him to abandon the hope of ever attaining an understanding of the truth, which is exactly what Hegel warned against when he said:

When thought grows hopeless of ever attaining, by its own means, the solution of the contradictions which it has by its own actions brought upon itself, it turns back to those solutions of the question with which the mind had learned to pacify itself in some of its other modes and forms. Unfortunately, however, the retreat of thought has led it, as Plato noticed even in his time, to a very uncalled for hatred of reason; and it then takes up against its own endeavours that hostile attitude of which an example is seen in the doctrine that 'immediate' knowledge, as it is called, is the exclusive form in which we become cognisant of the truth. (Enz.I.11)

It is clear that if Hegel is to avoid the presuppositions that are built into the foundational approach, he must also avoid the pitfalls of subjectivity and relativism which characterise Nietzsche's alternative to the theory of knowledge. In the following chapter, we shall seek Hegel's solution to this problem as we continue with our analysis of the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*.

CHAPTER II

SYSTEM

> Our knowledge forms an enormous system And only within this system has a particular bit the value we give it. (Wittgenstein, OC.410)

1. KNOWLEDGE AS A SYSTEM

A hint of Hegel's answer to the question 'What are the consequences of a non-foundational approach?' is to be found in his proposal to 'undertake a description of knowledge as it appears, a presentation of knowledge as a phenomenon' (PG.MM.72/B.135). If knowledge is accepted as a going concern, then one proceeds straightaway to the problem in hand. Knowledge itself is not examined since, as we have seen in Hegel's description of the critical method, we cannot employ an external yardstick without the circularity of 'knowing before you know'. Instead, knowledge is to be described as it appears. The phenomenologist 'makes no contributions', simply surrendering to the 'effort of the concept' (*Anstrengung des Begriff*).

The alternative to a foundational approach, then, is to describe knowledge as it appears within a given system. By 'system', Hegel means any organised or rule-governed practice found in the sciences, art, religion, and even philosophy. There can be no knowledge, and hence no grounds for philosophical puzzlement, outside of a system. Thus,

> it is important to emphasise . . . that knowledge is only real and can only be set forth fully in the form of science, in the form of system. (PG.MM.27/B.85)

And,

> The truth is only realised in the form of a system. (PG.MM.28/B.85)

This is essentially the position Wittgenstein took when he gave up the foundational approach of the *Tractatus*:

> All testing, all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system. And this system is not a more or less arbitrary and doubtful point of departure for all our argument: no, it belongs to the essence of what we call an argument. The system is not so much the point of departure, as the element in which arguments have their life. (OC.105)

One of the central themes of *On Certainty* is that a system of knowledge does not depend on any fundamental propositions the certainty of which is determined independently of the rest of the system. On the contrary, the search for more definite grounds of belief does not end with indubitable truths, but as Goethe and Hegel held, with activity:

> As if giving grounds did not come to an end sometime. But the end is not an ungrounded presupposition: it is an ungrounded way of acting. (OC.110, see also 204, 411)

In order to break the picture of a realm of foundational certainties, Wittgenstein often asks us to consider how we actually learn things:

> When we first *believe* anything, what we believe is not a single proposition, it is a whole system of propositions. (Light dawns gradually over the whole.) (OC.141)

The 'whole' system has cognitive priority over the parts:

> It is not the single axioms that strike me as obvious, it is the system in which the consequences and premises give one another *mutual* support. (OC.142, see also 143, 144, 410)

Once it is established that beliefs form a system, the examination of knowledge concentrates on the organisation of beliefs – the 'interrelatedness of the forms' (PG.MM.73/B.137) – rather than their foundations. The limits to what can be said are drawn according to the compatibility of what is said with other beliefs and activities. The 'craving' for consistency is the ultimate yardstick of truth. Changing attitudes and beliefs, and new developments in the sciences, however, reveal consistency to be an ideal which is never fully realised. This is why Hegel speaks of the shapes of unreal consciousness. The purpose of the phenomenological observation of these shapes is to reflect the various stages of the mind's craving for this ideal. And the name Hegel uses to refer to the appearance of these shapes is 'dialectic'.

Contrary to what has been said by numerous commentators on the legend of the Hegelian dialectic, Hegel never employed a dialectical method. Instead he argued that human knowledge (the object of his inquiry) is dialectical,[1] breaking into contradictions due to the attempt to consign thought into watertight categories, and finally driven on to a resolution by the 'craving of the mind's highest and inward life' (Enz.I.11). What we shall refer to as Hegel's 'phenomenological method'[2] is the description of mind's dialectic as it appears throughout the history of human thought; the standard for examining it, 'instead of being brought to bear upon the categories from without', adds Hegel, 'is immanent in their own action' (Enz.I.41.Zu.).

2. FROM EXPLANATION TO DESCRIPTION: WITTGENSTEIN

> I want to say here that it can never be our job to reduce anything to anything, or to explain anything Philosophy really *is* 'purely descriptive' (Wittgenstein, BB.18)

As we have observed, there are many important parallels between Hegel's and Wittgenstein's rejection of the critical method. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein had attempted to discover the 'general form of a proposition', but his attempt failed to resolve the same logical circle which Hegel had attributed to the Kantian endeavour; namely the fact that man must use language (knowledge) in order to examine language (knowledge).[3] The attempt to express the essence of language is something that cannot be expressed in language. This is why Wittgenstein eventually took it upon himself, in his later works, to describe the actual use of language.

Although he was to abandon the critique and give up the attempt to discover the essence of language, concentrating instead upon the description of language games and the way language derives its sense and meaning from its various activities human beings engage in, like Hegel, he never gave up the struggle to give expression to the absolute – to say what could not be said. This reveals the difference between philosophy and the other sciences. No matter how much significance is attached to the sciences, the desire to understand reality is never satisfied by any other means than a philosophical investigation. To this extent, Wittgenstein's work reflects a great metaphysical urge hidden by his theories of language, which, both in his earlier and later periods, prevented its expression.

In the *Investigations*, the question 'What is the essence of language?' is rejected as meaningless in just the same way as Hegel rejected the Kantian endeavour to locate the foundation and scope of human knowledge. Unable to provide an unshakable and presuppositionless explanation of the form or essence of language as a 'preliminary to its exercise', Wittgenstein in the *Investigations* committed himself to the rigours of a purely descriptive method. In their major works, both Hegel and Wittgenstein rejected the idea of an *a priori* short cut, but committed themselves to the various uses/appearances of language and knowledge, respectively. Very similar to the Hegelian proposal to 'undertake a description of knowledge as it appears' is Wittgenstein's remark that:

> It was true to say that our considerations could not be scientific ones. It was not of any possible interest to us to find out empirically 'that, contrary to our preconceived ideas, it is possible to think such-and-such' – whatever that may mean. (The conception of

thought as a gaseous medium.) And we may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place. And this description gets its light, that is to say its purpose, from the philosophical problems. (PI.109)

This does not mean that Wittgenstein abandoned the metaphysical urge to come to terms with the mystery of language. His purely descriptive method of 'assembling reminders' in order to bring back the wandering metaphysician within the limits of language can itself be seen to be as exhaustive an account of human language as Hegel's assembling the various shapes of consciousness represents an answer to the question 'What is absolute knowledge?'.

The analogy between Wittgenstein and Hegel should not be pursued in every respect. For example, Wittgenstein did not seek to 'indicate the nature of absolute knowledge itself' (PG.MM.81/B.145). This is due to certain fundamental assumptions which he carried over from the *Tractatus* into his later writings. It is well known that Wittgenstein rejected the transcendental assumption of a single logical unity in the world, and with it the assumption that language is primarily descriptive. In his later works, he dropped the metaphor of a picture in favour of a tool which can be set to different uses. Nevertheless, certain assumptions concerning the nature of metaphysics, which had their roots in the *Tractatus* theory of language, were retained and indeed developed within the programme of his later writings.

For example, the distinction between *saying* and *showing*, and his attempt to determine the boundaries of language, remained throughout his later writings. In the *Investigations*, after relinquishing his belief in the possibility of drawing the distinction between sense and nonsense by means of a reference to the essence of language, he no longer spoke of 'the language', but of different uses of language or 'language games'. Language, deriving its meaning from its use in human activities, was held to be social, diverse, and composed of a network of overlapping and criss-crossing games. Consequently there was no such thing as the limit of language, but the *limits* of language (PI.119). What we say has sense, not by comparing it with a reality pictured in logical form, as the *Tractatus* assumption led him to say, but what can be said in a particular activity, or game. The hardness of metaphysical impossibility was broken by pointing out that its employment of 'cannot' has no place in any given activity. For example, in *Zettel* he warns against the tendency of mistaking a metaphysical 'cannot' for a statement expressing an ultra-physical impossibility:

> Do not say 'one cannot', but say instead: 'it doesn't exist in this game'. Not: 'one cannot castle in draughts' but – 'there is no castling in draughts'. . . . (Z.134)

The task of the later works remained, in many respects, similar to that of the earlier. Philosophers had arrived at nonsense by saying what could not be said, by confusing the various 'grammars', as in the case of Augustine (BB,p.26), whose inability to understand what time was came from confusing the grammar of linear measurement with the process of recording time. The urge to say what lay outside the limits of any language game, Wittgenstein described as the urge 'to run one's head up against the limits of language' (PI.119). In doing so, philosophers had built for themselves 'houses of cards' upon the 'ground of language', a habit that can only be corrected by a return to the ways of ordinary language (PI.118). Wittgenstein likened metaphysical speculation to a machine that has no work. When we philosophise, the 'engine is idling' or 'language is on holiday' (PI.132).

It might be argued that even in his later works, Wittgenstein's account of philosophy is based on his theory of language, albeit a different theory of language, and this provides a standard for determining between sense and nonsense – with knowledge of the absolute falling into the category of nonsense. In this respect, his theory of language would stand as an unwarranted presupposition mediating between the absolute and the consciousness approaching it. Just as it was assumed, in the *Tractatus*, that language was essentially descriptive, and that which does not picture is nonsense (albeit important nonsense),[4] could we not argue that in the *Investigations* he assumed language to be functional: nonsense and philosophy being that which has no function? Given these presuppositions about language, we could then understand how Wittgenstein was again prevented from expressing the answers to philosophical questions. For it would seem that these presuppositions, which he brought to bear on his description of language, prevented him from expressing an answer to the philosophical problems which disturbed him throughout his life.

It is, of course, true that certain theories Wittgenstein held about language determined the way he was to tackle philosophical problems, and this we shall examine later. But it does not mean that Wittgenstein's method was not descriptive.[5] The charge that Wittgenstein's method was not descriptive contains an important fallacy, which is more easily recognised when employed against Wittgenstein than when employed against Hegel. The fallacy is this: it is clear that Wittgenstein is employing a standard for distinguishing sense from philosophical nonsense. Therefore his method is not

descriptive. In Hegel's case the inference is similar: although Hegel claims to be making no contribution, talk of the absolute and 'one-sided shapes of consciousness' presupposes that he is operating with a standard, namely the absolute. Against this position, however, it must be argued that *neither Wittgenstein nor Hegel operated without a standard, yet they had no standard of their own*. This is not as paradoxical as it sounds. Wittgenstein's injunction not to think but to look (PI.66), and Hegel's injunction to refrain from making any contribution since 'what remains for us . . . is simply the pure act of observation' (PG.MM.77/B.141), do not mean that we are to stare at the relevant phenomena with blank minds and offer purely phenomenal and non-theoretical descriptions. What we are to describe – the various 'language games' or 'shapes of consciousness' – already appear before us with a standard of their own. The description 'gets its light from the philosophical problems' (PI.109). Moreover, this standard, from within each 'shape' or 'game', is the absolute standard. The distinction between sense and nonsense (Wittgenstein) or complete and one-sided (Hegel) is not made by Wittgenstein and Hegel, who have no standard, but by the rules internal to the phenomena observed.

3. FROM EXPLANATION TO DESCRIPTION: HEGEL

> You come back, wandering shapes out of the past
> In which you first appeared to clouded eyes.
>
> (Goethe, *Faust*, I)

It is important that the nature of the relationship between the absolute and the various philosophical theses is fully grasped. According to Hegel, every philosophical theory must provide a definition of the absolute, since philosophy is defined as the science of the absolute. Critical philosophy has something definite to say about the absolute, even though it presupposes a distinction between knowledge and the absolute. Genuine knowledge, maintained Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, is separated from the absolute: the latter (however important) falls outside the realm of meaningful discourse. This, however, was still a definition of the absolute. Admittedly it rested on certain presuppositions concerning the nature of language, but it is a definite standpoint in relation to the absolute. Given this theory of language, we can say that Wittgenstein had some knowledge of the absolute, namely the fact that it lay outside the limits of language.

As we have argued, Wittgenstein's later definition of the absolute does not rest upon certain presuppositions of his own, and so the descriptive method, arising as a consequence of his rejection of the critical approach, was free from the philosopher's presuppositions. In refusing to find a ground upon which one could construct a science of the absolute, Wittgenstein was, in fact, saying something very similar to Hegel. The employment of any standard for the determination of absolute knowledge is arbitrary and can always be criticised from some other equally arbitrary standpoint. If the standard is problematic, it follows that we cannot provide an unproblematic definition of the absolute. This, in fact, is what the history of philosophy is all about: namely the history of disagreements over what shall count as a standard for settling philosophical problems. Hegel was unique in the history of philosophy insofar as he recognised that the mistake lay in trying to provide a standard and then applying it to the absolute. For one can always claim that the standard is faulty. Instead of looking for a standard, he accepted that the absolute must have some reality by virtue of the fact that philosophy was a going concern. The imposition of a standard he saw as an arbitrary affair serving only to make the reality of the absolute a matter of dispute. The first half of the Introduction therefore serves as a 'redirection of natural consciousness' away from this endeavour by revealing the arbitrary nature of ultimate standards. The second half, however, argues that the only way to achieve knowledge of the absolute is to observe it as it appears in the various shapes of consciousness.[6] The question we now face is not whether absolute knowledge is within the limits of human knowledge, but how it has been expressed in the various shapes of consciousness. Instead of bringing a standard to bear upon them, he exhorts the reader to engage himself in the 'pure act of observation' (PG.MM.77/B.141).

Hegel is not saying that an appeal to standards is meaningless; he is well aware that every discipline, every culture, or historical period, has very definite methods for drawing distinctions between correct and incorrect procedures by appealing to what are commonly recognisable absolute standards. What he is denying is that one can, in the manner of the foundation and edifice approach, postulate a transcendental standard for the measurement of human knowledge independent of the actual conditions of its appearance in a system. In this respect, there is little to choose between Hegel's and Wittgenstein's replies to the question of Socrates in the *Theaetetus*. Says Wittgenstein: 'When Socrates asks the question, "What is knowledge?" he does not even regard it as a *preliminary* answer to enumer-

ate cases of knowledge' (BB.20). For every contender that Theaetetus put forward as a definition of knowledge is promptly knocked down by Socrates, who claims that it is inadequate. But in doing so, Socrates is committing himself to the logical circle of 'knowing before you know', since both he and Theaetetus have considerable knowledge before asking for a definition of the subject. They can, for example, distinguish cases to which the term 'knowledge' is applicable from cases where it does not apply. If not, they would be unable to put forward plausible definitions and then refute them. Like Wittgenstein, Hegel concludes that Theaetetus can be answered by describing particular instances of knowledge in all their variety, such that the grasping of a family resemblance (or concrete universal) will eliminate the demand for a foundational definition. The implications for philosophy are obvious. On this view, philosophy, insofar as it is concerned with the absolute, is not a meta-science or an under-labourer which provides, examines, or justifies the foundations of the various sciences. On the contrary, it is purely descriptive; its purpose, as expressed in the famous remark in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, being only 'to paint the grey in grey'. This is primarily what lies behind the much maligned 'What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational', since 'rationality . . . enters upon external existence simultaneously with its actualisation, it emerges with an infinite wealth of forms, shapes and appearances' (PR.MM.24–25/K.p.10). Contrary to popular opinion, these remarks are not a justification of the *status quo*, but an injunction to describe.

In this respect, Hegel's concept of phenomenology is similar to the concept of philosophy put forward by Winch in *The Idea of a Social Science*. Winch, who is influenced by Wittgenstein, argues strongly against the 'underlabourer theory' where language is seen as a tool which must be examined by the philosopher for defects before one can achieve genuine knowledge in the various sciences.[7] Like Winch, Hegel maintains that philosophy cannot withdraw into an inner certainty. No science exists in a state of expectancy waiting for its standards to be tested by philosophy. This point has been grasped by Heidegger, who says of Hegel's concept of truth that the 'truth does not drop into consciousness from the sky. Consciousness is its own concept for itself. This is why it "provides itself with its own standard".'[8]

By exhorting the reader to describe rather than examine, Hegel is arguing that the correct way to understand the various determinations of knowledge is to accept them as they have been taken by those who formulated them:

inasmuch as phenomenal knowledge is our object, so at the outset the determinations of this object are taken as they immediately present themselves; and they present themselves very much as they have been taken. (PG.MM.76/B.140)

There is no need to employ a standard of our own. Such a 'contribution by us becomes superfluous (*überflussig*). . . . Indeed, it is not even necessary for us to undertake the actual *examination* . . . since consciousness examines itself. . . . ' (PG.MM.77/B.141)

The radical implications of Hegel's presuppositionless method have not been fully appreciated by his commentators. Findlay, for example, argues that neither Hegel's nor Wittgenstein's method was purely descriptive. Whilst Wittgenstein, says Findlay, conceals his presuppositions in rhetorical questions:

There is no doubt whatever that Hegel has certain basic preconceptions which not everyone would accept; they are Hegel's dogmas, which he doesn't set forth immediately and frankly because for one thing he would expose himself to very serious criticism if he did. Rather, he lets them spring on you bit by bit, and they become clear only as one goes on. But he knows them all along, knows where he is taking you to, and sees how he is to manage it, what strategy he is to employ at a given moment to get his result in the particular predicament in which he is.[9]

According to Findlay, these dogmas include the falsity of the independently finite, the primacy of the whole, and the primacy of conscious spirit. He concludes that it is always possible to reject certain Hegelian moves, that is to say, one can always refuse 'to drink the water'. But against this objection, it is necessary to point out that, in the first place, Hegel's presuppositionless method was not an advocacy for completely unstructured remarks. Hegel was fully aware of the dangers inherent in the attempt to describe reality completely free from any conceptual blinkers, an attempt which frequently succeeds in getting rid of one set whilst failing to notice another. For this reason, Hegel was not applying the method for describing reality without presuppositions. On the contrary, he was describing the process of shedding one set of blinkers for another wherein each one shields the light from the ever-present absolute. In doing so, his method consisted in a presuppositionless presentation of the preconceptions immanent in the shapes of consciousness under investigation.

Secondly, it is necessary to point out that Hegel's presuppositionless method does not entail ignorance as to the direction of his 'presentations', nor should it. Hegel is operating on two levels – 'for us' and 'for itself'. This avoids Wittgenstein's pretending not to know where he is going. Hegel knows where he is going because philosophy is already there. Findlay is therefore wrong to speak as if Hegel were employing a 'strategy' to get the reader to a 'particular

predicament'. The route has been taken by the various philosophies depicted. The more we learn of the history of philosophy, the clearer this route becomes. From our standpoint we have the advantage of hindsight. But the shapes of consciousness described throughout the *Phenomenology* do not have this knowledge: each one assumes that it has reached the end. We know that this is not the case. What we, who share Hegel's standpoint, are advised to do is suspend all knowledge that does not belong with the shape of consciousness under investigation. We must take it seriously and describe how it develops into another shape according to its own 'inner necessity'. But to be able to perform this exercise, we must be capable of knowing where the argument has led.

Another misunderstanding of Hegel's presuppositionless method is revealed in Loewenberg's account of the 'impartiality' of the phenomenological method. Loewenberg accepts that each shape employs its own standard, but reveals his confusion as to the role of the phenomenologist when he says that 'true impartiality, granting the philosopher's desire for it, must rest on the dual capacity to view a thing from within and from without'.[10] In this way, the impartiality of the phenomenological method 'hinges on a sort of rhythmic alternation of intuition and observation',[11] wherein the shapes are considered from our standpoint and from their own. But this allows too much participation from us to be consistent with Hegel's method, since it is implied that we do bring a standard to bear on each particular shape every time we switch back to our own standpoint. That Loewenberg is still concerned with determining the validity of each shape with reference to our standard can be seen in the following remarks. How can we, he asks, 'arrive at an opinion concerning its (the relevant shape) validity unless we first seek to understand the argument by yielding to its standpoint?'[12] Here, 'yielding to its standpoint' is nothing more than obtaining a better understanding of the theory we are about to criticise. Thus, 'only after having seized the argument from within may doubt arise concerning its claim to truth, provided the evidence for the claim, as appraised from without, be found wanting in adequacy.'[13] But what is this evidence? Why should it be acceptable to the standpoint observed?

If, for example, we did bring our own standard (Hegel sometimes calls it 'knowledge' or 'for us') to bear on a particular shape or system of knowledge (or what Hegel sometimes calls the 'truth' or 'in itself'), the latter, having its own standard, would not necessarily have to recognise our standard as having any validity. This is what Hegel means when he says that

the *in itself* of the object resulting from our investigation would not be the in itself of knowledge but rather its being *for us*. What we would affirm as its essence would not really be its truth, but only our knowledge of it. The essence or the standard would lie in us, and that which was to be compared with the standard and decided upon as a result of this comparison would not have to recognise that standard. (PG.MM.76/B. 140)

Instead of elevating a favourite standard, such as universal doubt (Descartes) or Newtonian physics (Kant), the unity of language (*Tractatus*), the verification principle, or even commonsense so favoured by Hegel's contemporaries as well as today, Hegel asks us to recognise the ultimate relativity of truth.

The *truth* Hegel equates with the consciousness designated as '*in itself*' whilst *knowledge* is equated with our standpoint (for us) (PG.MM.76/B.140). But, 'In what consciousness within its own self designates as the *in itself* or the *true*, we have the standard by which consciousness itself proposes to measure its knowledge' (PG.MM.77/B.140). The truth, in other words, is relative to each standard provided by the various shapes which have appeared throughout history.

The recognition of this fact explodes all transcendental certainties. When Hegel says that the 'absolute alone is true and the true alone is absolute', it is to be understood that the truth is internally related to each shape in which it makes its *appearance* (PG.MM.70/B.133). An acquaintance with the various shapes and the truth which is relative to them, claims Hegel, is destructive of any doctrine of transcendental certainties and therefore of any epistemology. The end of epistemology, or indeed the quest for foundational certainties, is achieved by no other means than a presentation of every epistemology, or ontology, as the correct one.[14]

4. THE PATH TO THE ABSOLUTE

> The philosopher's stone is at the end of the rainbow, and even if we could reach it, it would turn to dust in our hands. (Renford Bambrough)[15]

If the absolute is not reached by an examination of the means of taking hold of it, then how is it arrived at? Does it make sense to speak of a path to the absolute? Absolute knowledge, we have argued, is not defined, since definitions are problematic. Nor can we speak of a path culminating in a blinding revelation, since each previous stage 'would not necessarily have to recognise that standard'. What is a blinding revelation from within one shape of consciousness may be pure charlatanism from another standpoint.

Then how does the absolute make its appearance? Hegel's answer is that it is there all the time. As he says in the famous transition at the end of the *Logic*, 'it stands in its own way', shielding itself from its own light (L.MM.547/JS.464). To step into any sphere of knowledge is to step into the proximity of the absolute, yet philosophers from Plato onwards have failed to grasp this, insisting instead that absolute knowledge is concerned only with transcendental, or even divine, standards, when all the time the absolute lay in the activity before them. Any system of knowledge presupposes the presence of the absolute; it is a condition of there being any knowledge at all. This point can be illustrated by drawing a comparison between the presence of philosophy in a system of knowledge and the presence of absolute standards within a system of knowledge. One acquires standards of excellence by learning the appropriate skills, by learning how to transform the natural world. One does not approach carpentry or medicine with an absolute standard; one acquires it as one's practical knowledge increases. This is essentially what is involved in the development of a 'craftsman's eye'. The apprentice, lacking the experience and skill of the craftsman, often has difficulty in seeing the flaw in a piece of work: he lacks the standard which the more experienced craftsman applies without a second thought. This ability comes only with the build up of considerable knowledge and experience within the craft. In this way, the absolute can be said to be internally related to the practice just as the idea of perfection is built into the learning of an appropriate skill.

It is not that there are limits which rule out comprehension of the absolute, but that these limits are illusory. Moreover, it is not the case that these limits are such that, with effort, they can be surpassed. This would place the absolute in the sphere of the contingent, and philosophy would be a super-science. On the contrary, the absolute is, in a very important sense, before us all the time, manifesting itself in the various systems of knowledge:

> The Good, the absolutely Good, is eternally accomplishing itself in the world: and the result is that it need not wait upon us, but is already by implication, as in full actuality, accomplished. This is the illusion under which we live. (Enz.I.212)

The illusion Hegel speaks of is of an external relationship between the absolute and the shapes of consciousness in which it appears. It is nothing more than this illusion which prevents us from grasping the absolute. For this reason, the *presentation* of the various shapes of consciousness cannot lead up to absolute knowledge, since the absolute is relative to each *presentation*. What it can lead to, however, is a philosophical comprehension of the absolute. Heidegger ex-

presses a similar point when he says that

> the presentation does not by any means guide natural representation through the museum of the shapes of consciousness, in order to send it off after the tour, through a special door, into absolute knowledge. Rather with its first step if not before then, the presentation dismisses natural consciousness as that consciousness which in its very character remains wholly incapable of following the presentation.[16]

The presentation is not a path leading anywhere, if path is to be conceived in terms of a series of steps where each step gains ground from the starting point towards a clearly defined goal. Instead, each step must be seen to be complete *in itself* possessing its own expression of absolute knowledge.

But is not this contradicted by certain references which give the impression that the absolute is being steadily approached? This interpretation is supported by Hegel's description of

> the pathway of the natural consciousness which is striving towards true knowledge, or as the path of the soul which is making its way through the sequence of its own transformations as through stages prescribed to it by its very nature, that it may, by purifying itself, lift itself to the level of spirit and attain cognisance of what it is in itself, through the completed experience of its own self. (PG.MM.72/B.135)

The point is that the transition from one shape to another is not from the less comprehensive to the more comprehensive, the opaque to the crystal clear. The transitions are characterised by the breakdown of an illusion.[17] That is to say, from within each new shape which brings its own standard (in itself or truth), the previous shape appears illusory and partial. But the ultimate illusion is that knowledge (for us) is transcendental (an illusion shared by each shape), and this Hegel hopes to break by giving a presentation of a succession of shapes in which the presentness of the absolute is relative to all of them.

The recognition of the ultimate partiality of truth is, for Hegel, a death-blow to the quest for foundational certainty. Advancing a Wittgensteinian argument, Renford Bambrough is close to the heart of the Hegelian method when he says, 'The traditional picture of philosophy as a quest for unshakeable foundations is a profound misunderstanding, and its distortions arise from an obsessive and exclusive attention to a profound but partial truth.'[18]

PART TWO

THE FOUNDATIONS OF MORALITY

CHAPTER III

THE TRIAL AND DEATH OF SOCRATES IN HEGEL'S HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

> The Athenian people were thus, not only justified, but also bound to react against it according to their law, for they regarded this principle as a crime. In general history we find that this is the position of the heroes through whom a new world commences, and whose principle stands in contradiction to what has gone before and disintegrates it; they appear to be violently destroying the laws (Hegel, GP.I.MM.512/HS.444)

Throughout the history of Western thought, all major contributions to moral and political philosophy have taken a stand in relation to the trial of Socrates. There are good reasons for this. His questioning of the accepted foundations of morality and his equation of virtue with self-knowledge rank Socrates as one of the founders of ethics as a distinct branch of human knowledge. There is, however, another reason why the trial and death of Socrates is important in Hegel's history of philosophy. This is bound up with one of the most fundamental problems arising out of Hegel's descriptive method: How is the world mediated through the various conceptual frameworks, or shapes of consciousness, which have appeared throughout human history? Another way of posing this problem is to ask: What is the relationship between philosophy and history? A shape of consciousness can be described as a philosophical expression of a form of life at a certain stage in its historical development. According to Hegel, philosophy is a reflection of human institutions and developments in science and culture. It follows that to speak of a shape of consciousness is to speak of both the philosophy of an epoch and its level of cultural development. In the events culminating in the trial and death of Socrates, we see one of the clearest transitional stages from one shape of consciousness to another acted out in historic reality. It also provides us with an example of tragic collision which, according to Hegel, constitutes the universal principle of philosophy and the human history it reflects. The events culminating in the death of Socrates represent, for Hegel, a transition from one shape of consciousness to another. Socrates' prosecutors, the defenders of the old morality, saw the Socratic standpoint as an untruth, whilst those who followed Socrates saw it as a revolution

that had swept aside the deceit and dogma of the previous epoch. What is unique in Hegel's account is that the philosophy of Socrates is presented as it appeared both to his prosecutors and to his defenders.

1. THE SOCRATIC PRINCIPLE

In the twentieth century, the charges against Socrates appear trivial and unjust. But Hegel's point is that what Socrates represented was seen as a serious threat to a very unstable democracy during a period which saw a transformation of political beliefs and moral attitudes. In the modern period, Plato's account of the trial and death of Socrates has become a rallying-point for anti-democratic forces. Whilst borrowing heavily from Plato and Xenophon, Hegel's interpretation can be seen as a defence of Athenian democracy, although it preserves what is correct in the Socratic antithesis to it. Plato's disdain for democracy is reflected in what Hegel describes as the Socratic 'principle of subjectivity'. How did this principle manifest itself to Socrates? The answer, says Hegel, is in the form of his own *daemon* or genius, which Hegel depicts as a 'double of consciousness' not unconnected with its 'public manifestations of trances and catalepsy' (GP.I.MM.495/HS.425). Most writers interpret the Socratic *daemon* in terms of the individual's conscience and reason, and then conclude that the suppression of the Socratic *daemon* is equivalent to the suppression of the voice of reason as it has allegedly been suppressed in ages less enlightened than the present. This view overlooks the fact that every age has its criterion for determining what shall count as the voice of reason and conscience, and what shall distinguish it from subversion. According to Hegel, the very precariousness of the Athenian framework of morality, at the time of Socrates' trial, must be taken into consideration. Hegel is, therefore, the first philosopher to take a serious look at the way the Socratic *daemon* appeared to the Athenians.

According to Hegel, the introduction of the Socratic principle represents a movement from immediacy to mediacy in the Greek mind. The principle which Socrates articulated was that 'man has to find from himself both the end of his actions and the end of the world, and must attain to truth himself. True thought', he adds, 'thinks in such a way that its import is as truly objective as subjective' (GP.I.MM.443/HS.386). The objectivity of Divine command, for example, is so only because it is mediated through a system of rules and training which governs religious practices. Within these

practices, there is room for subjective interpretation. 'The animal', says Hegel, 'has no religion because it only feels; but what is spiritual rests on the mediation of thought, and pertains to man' (GP.I.MM. 443/HS.386). The position that Hegel attributes to Socrates is familiar to both Marxists and Wittgensteinians. What appears as natural and objective is derived from a process of training which suppresses some attitudes and reactions, and encourages others. In a more sophisticated form, this standpoint finds expression in Marx's claim that 'eternal laws' are only a reflection of the social base:

> in an age and in a country where royal power, aristocracy, and bourgeoisie are contending for mastery and where, therefore, mastery is shared, the doctrine of the separation of powers proves to be the dominant idea and is expressed as an 'eternal law'.[1]

The Socratic principle attacked the 'eternal laws' peculiar to fifth century Athens, and for this reason was interpreted as a sacrilegious onslaught on those very practices and truths which were claimed to stand in an immediate relation to human consciousness.

The uniqueness of Socrates is further emphasised by the fact that he introduced morality as a product of mediations: neither subjective in the sense of personal interests nor objective in the way the Athenians held their moral principles to be when they 'acted rationally in their relations without knowing that they were particularly excellent' (GP.I.MM.445/HS.388). Morality, being reflective, was, for Hegel's Socrates, neither exclusively natural, arbitrary, nor prudential. Whilst his attitude towards the Gods revealed his piety, his philosophical reasoning called into question their alleged objectivity. A similar attitude towards naturalistic beliefs in a transcendental Divinity is to be found in John Anderson's rejection of what he calls 'a hierarchical doctrine of reality':

> If, for example, we are told to do something because God commands us to do so, we can immediately ask why should we do what God commands – and any intelligent answer brings us back to *human* relationships, to the struggle between opposing movements.[2]

To grasp Hegel's interpretation of the application of the Socratic principle to morality, one must understand that, for Hegel, ethics is characterised by a tension between Ethical Life (*Sittlichkeit*) and Subjective Morality (*Moralität*). In the teachings of Socrates, we are to find a move away from the natural standpoint of Ethical Life to a more rational Subjective Morality. These terms, however, like many of Hegel's correlative pairs, have a relative meaning. In the *Philosophy of Right*, for example, Subjective Morality is best under-

stood as an abstract and one-sided standpoint, lacking any concrete social background or moral traditions. When Ethical Life transcends Subjective Morality, it fulfills a need for a rational social order where rational institutions and laws provide the content for conscientious conviction.[3] In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, however, in placing emphasis upon Subjective Morality, Socrates is portrayed in opposition to a form of Ethical Life which had no provisions for subjective approval, being characterised as a natural, half-instinctive virtue that rests on obedience to established custom. It follows that the one-sidedness in the Socratic principle would be overcome only in a higher level of Ethical Life, the rational state, in which the rational individual would find reconciliation with its laws and customs. This, of course, was not be be attained in the Greek world, which is one reason why Hegel sees the personal tragedy of Socrates as a reflection of the tragic decline of Greek culture.

The effects of the Socratic principle therefore present us with a valuable insight into another pair of Hegelian correlatives: mediate and immediate. Certain moral principles which are held to be immediate and natural become mediated and reflected when a new shape of consciousness comes on the scene. For this reason, it is important to avoid drawing a rigid line between 'immediate' and 'mediated'.[4] What is immediate at one moment may prove to be mediated from another moment. What is perfectly natural and obvious from one standpoint may be conventional and arbitrary from another.[5] Hegel's point is that nothing is absolutely immediate in the sense that its presentation can be external to a system of mediations and, conversely, nothing is mediated such that it cannot be immediate.[6] To the extent that a philosopher questions the immediacy of certain principles, philosophy cannot be said to 'leave everything as it is'. Once immediacy has been questioned, the principle can never be the same again. To grasp this point is to understand the reluctance of certain 'underdeveloped' communities to accept the alleged benefits of the Western world. Consider the negative attitude of Heinmot Tooyalaket, chief of the Nez Percés (an offshoot of the Sioux tribe), towards the white man's schools. The Commissioner for Indian Affairs asked him why he did not want schools.

'They will teach us to have churches', was the reply.
'Do you not want churches?' asked the Commissioner.
'No, we do not want churches.'
'Why do you not want churches?'

> 'They will teach us to quarrel about God. We do not want to learn that. We may quarrel with men sometimes about things on this earth, but we never quarrel about God. We do not want to learn that.'[7]

Once religion becomes a rational activity, and not immediately obvious, it loses a degree of significance. No one had grasped this point better than Heinmot Tooyalaket. Let us therefore consider what happens when one demands rational justification for a natural practice. In the primitive society of Heinmot Tooyalaket, prayer might be said to be a natural activity, and important decisions are always preceded by communication with the Deity. One day a stranger comes to the village and demands that they give a rational explanation of these practices. He explains to his baffled audience that in his society such practices do not exist, or that they are carried out in a different way. If he can convince them of this, he will also have succeeded in partly convincing them that their religion is not natural and immediate, but is culturally relative. They might think that only wicked societies refrain from participating in their kind of religious practices, but the option of a different system is revealed as a possibility. This is the first inroad into the immediacy of prayer. The second inroad is made when the stranger demands that they give him a rational justification of their practices. Now, prayer is very much a going concern in this society; the institutions of priesthood, chieftainship, and many other social practices are bound up with it. So when challenged to provide a justification of their religious practices, it will not be long before such a justification is provided. In this way, the second inroad into immediacy is effected. A rational justification is tantamount to a negation of the original spontaneity. Yet if it is recognised that other societies do not have a particular practice, it is necessary to find a justification as to why this society should have it. In this way, prayer becomes mediated into one possibility amongst others, its necessity transformed into contingency.

The sociologist, Peter Berger, offers an interesting example of the shift from the natural to the rational and the consequential shift in meaning of a set of practices. He cites an account of a visitor to a collective agricultural settlement in Tanzania.[8] This *ujaama* village was peopled by many different tribes. The visitor asked whether traditional tribal ceremonies and dances were still being performed, and was answered affirmatively. He was told that once or twice a year members of the village would gather together and the different tribal groups would perform their traditional dances. The spokes-

man added that this was a very good thing since it helped the people in the village understand one another better. Previously tribal dances were performed at times designated by tradition. Now they are staged for occasions chosen by the village council. And they could equally choose to postpone the event. Previously they were performed for the Gods. Now they are performed for outsiders and a rationale is attached to the ceremony. Previously they danced because it was necessary to do so. It was unreflective, like breathing or sleeping. Now it is done for a reason and, if better reasons were advanced for it to be abolished, it would be difficult to resist them. In sum, even if every movement of the dance is the same, it is no longer the same dance. Berger describes this sequence as a shift from 'giveness' to 'choice', yet his point is exactly the same as Hegel's when the latter speaks of the damage done to the naturalness of Greek immediacy by the rational Socrates. From the Athenian standpoint, the rational morality of Socrates was seen as destructive of moral standards.

To be sure, Socrates can be depicted as a pious man, but rational piety was alien to the Greek spirit. The Socratic dialectic easily disposes of the alleged foundations of Athenian morality, but an inability to provide a formal defence of a set of beliefs does not necessarily indicate their lack of significance. Religious faiths, political creeds, and so on, do not passively wait for a philosopher to equip them with rational foundations. Their strength lies often in their unreflected immediacy. The sharpness of the wits in questioning beliefs does not bear testimony to their weakness, but more often to a lack of understanding on the part of the quick-witted sceptic. This was grasped by Nietzsche, whose standard for evaluating the stage of consciousness associated with the Socratic principle was the decadence it reflected within the Athenian culture. The popularity of Socratic questioning amongst the young Athenian aristocracy, says Nietzsche, revealed their decadence. By fulfilling their demand to be taught virtue in terms of the Socratic equation 'virtue = reason = happiness', Socrates revealed their lack of natural morality. When people demand a better morality, says Nietzsche, they reveal the decadence of the old order: 'It is self-deception', he says, 'on the part of philosophers and moralists to imagine that by making war on decadence they therewith elude decadence themselves.'[9] One cannot adopt a morality of improvement: 'the entire morality of improvement, the Christian included, has been a misunderstanding'.[10] Morality, he argues, can only be natural: 'to have to combat one's instincts – that is the formula for decadence: as

long as life is ascending happiness and instinct are one'.[11] One cannot provide a rational foundation for morality, still less improve on the existing morality by providing rational grounds for its axioms.

Consider, for example, Socrates' questioning of the pious Euthyphro. Does the latter's lack of dialectical skill undermine his piety or does it reflect more upon Socrates' misunderstanding of its nature? The story is as follows: The pious Euthyphro is to appear as the prosecutor of his father who was charged with manslaughter after unwittingly causing the death of a peasant he had arrested for killing another peasant in a drunken brawl. Euthyphro's father had tied his prisoner up and left him at the roadside where, unattended, he died of starvation. For neglecting the peasant, Euthyphro's father must now stand trial. The son is concerned about the rightness of his role as prosecutor and he brings the matter to Socrates for discussion. Would he be wrong, he asks, in the Gods' eyes, if he let an unpunished man go free? Socrates thinks it is outrageous for a man to prosecute his own father and, with the use of dialectic, tries to dissuade him from his actions. This dialogue has been examined by P.T. Geach, who argues that whilst Socrates can easily tie Euthyphro in knots by asking such questions as whether pious deeds are pious because they please the Gods or please the Gods because they are pious, it does not follow that this display of dialectic is convincing to Euthyphro.[12] The latter simply shrugs it off, insisting that he has no time for frivolous discussion, and leaves Socrates to go about his lawful business. 'Was this', asks Geach, 'a victory for Socrates? Or was it a victory for simple piety over sophistical tricks?'[13] In daily life, an inability to provide a justification for one's principles, or the unintelligibility of questioning them, is often a measure of their strength. Both Nietzsche and Geach recognise this fact and, like Hegel, they show how Socrates can be criticised according to the Athenian standards. This interpretation of the trial of Socrates has certain advantages over the ahistoric version which presents Socrates as a liberal reformer persecuted by conservative dogmatists. Like Geach, Hegel's account of the accusations made against Socrates is seen through the eyes of those whose standards were offended. But insofar as Hegel sees an ultimate unity in competing shapes of consciousness, his interpretation is more comprehensive than either Geach's or Nietzsche's. The latter were only concerned with the standpoint that Socrates had offended; Hegel was concerned with both and he takes into account the fact that the Socratic principle itself, when it replaced the old morality, was to provide the correct framework for the evaluation of human activity. Geach

and Nietzsche may be correct when they depict Socrates as a decadent type, but according to Hegel, Socrates reflected a new standard for determining decadence.

2. THE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST SOCRATES

The Socratic principle cut very deeply into the foundations of the Athenian way of life. This is not easily seen from Plato's and Xenophon's respective apologies, for in portraying Socrates as being too good to be true, they obscured the threat that Socrates was seen to present to the old order. His offence was not against a ruling clique with whom he had fallen into disfavour; it was against the whole framework of Athenian knowledge and morality:

> The spirit of the people in itself, its constitution, its whole life, rested, however, on a moral ground, on religion, and could not exist without this absolutely secure basis. Thus because Socrates makes the truth rest on the judgment of inward consciousness, he enters upon a struggle with the Athenian people as to what is right and true. His accusation was therefore just, and we have to consider this accusation as also the end of his career. (GP.I.MM.497/HS.427)

Following these remarks, Hegel describes how the charges against Socrates were expressed on two fronts: informally by Aristophanes in *The Clouds* and formally by the people of Athens.

A. *The informal accusation*

The Clouds is an excellent piece of satire, which must not be read as a piece of idle lampooning. Like all serious satire, the issues it deals with are of fundamental social importance at the time of writing. A good satirist must be able to understand and be capable of taking seriously the standpoint he wishes to satirise. One must be able to recognise a reflection of the truth in the satirist's description. In many ways, he is a dialectician in the Hegelian sense, since the Hegelian dialectic is, to a great extent, a satirical description of the various shapes of consciousness that have appeared throughout history. Only by taking a standpoint seriously can one see its full implications. Aristophanes therefore depicts, in an exaggerated sense, how Socrates and his followers discover the 'nullity of the laws of the determinate good as it is to the natural consciousness' (GP.I.MM.484/HS.428). We must also remember that Aristophanes is depicting the Socratic standpoint as it would appear to the Greeks at that time, albeit in a necessarily exaggerated sense.

In *The Clouds*, the story is told of Strepsiades and his son. Strepsi-

ades was educated in the ways of Socrates and learned how to employ the Socratic dialectic to avoid the payment of his debts. Becoming successful in this art, Strepsiades meets his creditors and puts them off with excellent reasons, even mocking them, and is very glad to have learned all this from Socrates; so glad, in fact, that he sends his son to be educated in the same tradition. Unfortunately for Strepsiades, his son returns from his period of Socratic enlightenment only to behave in a very unseemly way towards his father and eventually gives him a sound thrashing. This proves too much for Strepsiades who, says Hegel, 'cries to the supreme power, as if this were the last indignity, but the son shows him, with equally good reasons, obtained by the method derived from Socrates, that he had a perfect right to strike him' (GP.I.MM.485/HS.429). By now, of course, Strepsiades has finished with Socratic wisdom and returned to the old ways, taking revenge by setting fire to the house of Socrates.

The serious point in Aristophanes' tale was brought out in an exaggerated sense. Aristophanes had indicated the fundamental flaw in the Socratic method: it is negative; its power rests mainly on the subject's criticism of existing institutions. In certain circumstances this can be very commendable. If the subject happens to be morally perfect – as we are led to believe in the case of Socrates – it is even more commendable. But there is nothing in the dialectic itself to prevent it from being employed with a bad conscience, which shows, at least, that there is nothing morally superior about the Socratic method. This is why Hegel concludes his comments on the informal accusation with the remark that when the conscience is bad, the story of Strepsiades must repeat itself.

B. *The formal and public accusation*

Many philosophers have singled out Socrates as a virtuous man wrongly sentenced by evil men. Comparisons are often drawn with McCarthyite trials and witch-hunts. This is misleading and is, in many ways, similar to the way the media singles out individuals who defy a democratically taken decision to engage in industrial action as heroes and martyrs without presenting the other side of the case. In such cases, the individual's stand against the majority is praised more for partisan reasons than for any liberal sentiment concerning the right to express unpopular opinions. It is quite clear that the trial of Socrates has, for similar reasons, been often cited as an argument against the spread of democratic institutions. Hegel is strongly opposed to this approach, and his lectures on the trial of

Socrates contain several rebukes to his anti-democratic contemporaries. His sympathy towards the accusers of Socrates, however, is bound up with his attempt to present Athenian democracy on its own terms and to reveal how the repudiation of democratic principles by Socrates and Plato must have appeared to the Athenians. To this end, Hegel examines the trial of Socrates in two aspects: first, the relationship of the accused to the charge; second, the competency of the prosecution to try him and the defendent's attitude towards that competency. Hegel claims that Socrates was found guilty with respect to the content of the accusations, but was condemned to death because he refused to recognise the competency of the prosecution and the legitimacy of the sovereign will of the people from which the prosecution derived its powers. In sections 3 and 4 below, we shall examine these two aspects of the trial and sentencing of Socrates.

3. THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE ACCUSED TO THE CHARGES

The accusation consisted of two charges: (A) that Socrates did not consider as Gods those who were held as such by the Athenian people, but introduced new ones; (B) that he also led young men astray by casting doubt upon what was regarded as immediate truth.

A. *That Socrates introduced new Gods*

Both charges have the same foundation, namely the way in which doubt has been cast on the immediacy of morality and religious truth. For the Greeks, individual conscience was inward and contingent, so for more definite advice they turned to external advice from oracles, soothsayers and so on. Appealing to his own *daemon*, Socrates appeared to be rejecting the public religion. But as Xenophon points out in his *Memorabilia* (and Plato in the *Republic* and *Phaedo*), Socrates actually sacrificed and worshipped as others did. Unlike Anaxagoras, Socrates was not an atheist, so what is the force of the charge? Hegel suggests that it lies in his insistence that the will of the Gods need not be expressed in the commonly accepted ways; that is to say, the position of entrails, thunder and lightning, and so on, need not in themselves reveal the immediate signs of the Divine will. That a thunderstorm is a sign from the Gods would not be disputed by Socrates; what he implied was that it is a matter of human convention as to how that sign is read. And since the Gods

had infinite power, argued Socrates, they were quite capable of revealing themselves in many different ways, one of them being the rational conscience of Socrates. Some of Socrates' defenders were therefore near the truth when they said that amongst the prosecution were men who were jealous because Socrates was more favoured by the Gods. But they did not get to the heart of the matter, which is this: it is a curious fact about religious practices that no one is willing to believe one who claims to have Divine knowledge by any other than the conventional ways. In every religious practice are established norms for the expression of Divine will, and these norms entail a means of distinguishing between valid and bogus claims for the possession of Divine truth. Herein lies the necessary conservativism of religion. Many of the saints have spent their earthly existence at loggerheads with the established orthodoxy because their communication with the Deity was not in conformity with the established pattern. In principle, there is no reason why a God should not manifest himself to a fisherman and, as long as the distance in time is great enough, one can believe that once it really happened. But this is never believed by the establishment at the time the claim is made. The 'shoes of the fisherman' can only be worn in the 'corridors of power'. As Hegel says,

> it is not decided in a general way that the God foreknows everything, or that he can make revelations to individuals; this may be admitted *in abstracto*, but not in actuality, and it is believed in no individual cases. Men do not believe that to him, to this individual, there has been a revelation. For why him more than to others? (GP.I.MM.500/HS.433)

These are the objections raised against both prophets and charlatans alike; but there were even more fundamental reasons for rejecting the Socratic *daemon*, as a genuine expression of the Divine will. The Socratic *daemon*, says Hegel, 'was a medium of a different kind to any formerly respected in the Greek religion' (GP.I.MM.502/HS. 434–35). 'This inward certainty, however, was undoubtedly a new God, and not the God of the Athenians existing hitherto, and thus the accusation of Socrates was quite just', concludes Hegel (GP.I.MM.503/HS.435). The substitution of the Socratic *daemon* for other contingencies appeared as a rejection of all established religious customs, threatening the power of the priests and the existing morality, which were bound up with the religious practices of the time. It was not the case that the existing religious institutions were corrupt; they had their own standards for distinguishing between the corrupt and the sincere. Socrates' new standard, says Hegel, was judged correctly by criteria internal to the old standard

and was held to have violated the religious beliefs of the Athenians. In this sense, Hegel concludes, the verdict on the first charge was just.

B. *The charge of misleading the youth*

In reply to the second charge were many witnesses willing to testify to the extent of Socrates' virtue, just as others had testified to his piety. The defence's case rested on the fact that Socrates sought only to teach young men who came under his influence none but the highest virtues. When accused of inciting sons into disobedience of their parents, Socrates replied by asking whether it was a crime that those seeking the highest good should prefer his advice to that of their parents. Hegel points out that this reply, however just, is not exhaustive, the real issue being 'the intrusion of a third into the absolute relation between parents and children' (GP.I.MM.505/ HS.437). The actual case cited was that of Anytos' son who, having been influenced by Socrates, it was alleged, then took to drinking and evil ways rather than follow the respectable profession of his father. The facts presented are as follows: Anytos' son was a very intelligent youth and was recognised as such by Socrates, who believed that the youth was intellectually equipped for a higher calling than his father's tannery. Anytos, however, forbade him to quit his trade, and Socrates then prophesied that the youth would not rest content in the profession his father had chosen and, lacking the guidance of a more rational person, his dissatisfaction would turn into self-destruction. This came about and Socrates' prophecy was fulfilled.

What sort of wrong had Socrates committed in this affair? It could be argued that Socrates was perfectly right in telling the youth that his talents were suited to greater things, but did he, within the moral framework of the time, have the moral right to tell him so? It is perfectly correct to say that, given time, Anytos' son would find his work uncongenial and frustrating, but it is a different matter when this dislike is brought about by an outsider. By telling him that he was fitted for something better, Socrates had planted the germ of dissatisfaction. No one wished to deny that the youth had talent, or that his dissatisfaction would eventually find expression. The central issue was that Socrates, an acknowledged sophist whose opinions were respected amongst the youth, had directly contributed to the youth's dissatisfaction, and by doing so had increased the son's contempt for his father. It was this intervention between parent and offspring that Hegel cites as a justification of the charge of misleading the youth – a charge that was further substantiated when it was

pointed out that two of the youths that Socrates had influenced, Critias and Alcibiades, had been responsible for bringing Athens to the brink of ruin.

By modern standards, the charges brought against Socrates appear trivial and trumped up. But Hegel's point is that they were made at a time when the Athenians saw many of their fundamental institutions under attack. An analogy with twentieth-century practices can bring out what is of significance in Hegel's argument: it is only during a national crisis that criticism of faith, family, and flag is severely punished. A more secure state will tolerate even the most devastating critique of its treasured institutions. Hegel thus recognises one of the most unpalatable features of political life: under threatened conditions, freedom of opinion, even when no physical threat is intended, is seen to constitute a very real threat to the social order. The view that absolutely free opinion is harmless, he says,

> is only true in part, for with the populace the eloquence of sophistry stirs up the passions. It is also said, 'This is only theoretical, no action follows.' But the state really rests on thought, and its existence depends on the sentiments of men, for it is a conceptual and not a physical kingdom. Hence it has certain maxims and principles which constitute its support, and if these are attacked the Government must intervene. (GP.I.MM.507/HS.439)

Socrates had attacked the 'maxims and principles' of Athenian life in their two most important areas: (a) by the introduction of new Gods who sanctioned disobedience, and (b) family piety, which was the moral foundation of the Athenian state. The charges against Socrates were therefore substantiated and, according to Hegel, Socrates was justly found guilty.

4. THE DEATH OF SOCRATES AND THE COMPETENCY OF THE PROSECUTION

According to Hegel, Socrates was found guilty as accused, but not for that reason condemned to death. His death was a consequence of his refusal to recognise the competency of the prosecution and his attitude towards the democratic assembly of the citizens from which the prosecution derived its legitimacy. As in English law, the Athenian *Heliast* (jury) determined guilt, whilst the punishment was determined by some other means. In English law, this is the task of the judge, but the Athenian custom was to grant the accused the liberty of suggesting, within certain limitations, a suitable penalty. As well as a testimony to the humaneness of Athenian law, Hegel notes how it also served the function of reconciling the criminal

with his crime, since the punishment, like the crime, could then be said to be derived from the will of the criminal.[14] At this stage, guilt or innocence is beyond the range of the proceedings, and the role of the accused is to submit to the decision of the court and discuss the nature of the punishment, appeal for leniency and so on. To overrule the court's decision, one would, as in English law, have to appeal to a higher authority, in this case the democratic assembly of the citizens. By proposing no penalty, but on the contrary a reward, Socrates was seen to be repudiating both the decision of the court and the legitimacy of the democratic assembly of the citizens. In the prosecution's view, Socrates would have been more consistent in his claim to be a seeker of virtue and respect for law if he had not only 'submitted himself to the laws, but also to the judgment' (GP.I.MM. 509/HS.441). A direct appeal to the people, voicing his misgivings concerning the competency of the prosecution, was one possible alternative since a precedent had been set by Pericles, who had appealed in this way for the lives of Aspasia and Anaxagoras. Hegel adds, 'There is nothing dishonouring to the individual in this, for he must bend before genuine power, and the real and noblest power is the people' (GP.I.MM.509/HS.441).

Throughout the Socratic dialogues, Plato presents Socrates as being contemptuous of democracy, caricaturing democrats as immoral, irrational, and slavish to their baser appetites. This, of course, renders it easier to defend Socrates' refusal to make a democratic appeal to the populace. Unlike most political martyrs, Socrates is unique in that he is not interested in exposing the alleged corruption of his prosecutors to public censure. It is against the anti-democratic sentiments behind Plato's argument-by-caricature that Hegel now turns, arguing that the refusal of Socrates to accept the judgment of the court or (if there were serious grounds for doubting the competency of the prosecution) make a direct appeal to the people means that he was solely responsible for his death. No one refuses to recognise the legitimacy of a court out of ignorance. Such actions are either deliberately revolutionary (in which case the agent is fully aware of the risks and willing to suffer the consequences) or of misplaced morality, commendable only in the eyes of the enemies of one's peers. Thus Hegel concludes:

> Socrates hence exposed himself to death, which could not be regarded as the punishment for the fault of which he was found guilty; for the fact that he would not himself determine the punishment and thus disdained the juridicial power of the people was foremost in leading to his condemnation. (GP.I.MM.509/HS.442)

No state, or institution, not even a 'free people like the Athenians can recognise a conscience which knows no consciousness of having

fulfilled its duty excepting its own consciousness', says Hegel (GP.I.MM.510/HS.442). Hegel is clearly concerned here with anti-democratic sentiments which often find expression in an appeal to individual conscience, and he offers the following reply to one who makes such an appeal: 'If you have the consciousness of having done your duty, we must also have the consciousness that you have done so' (GP.I.MM.510/HS.442). Knowledge of virtue is, for Hegel, essentially public. Personal conscience is to be explained only by reference to public criteria and a public system of moral rules and traditions. Socrates may have been a good man, but it was not for him alone to decide. In a modern state, says Hegel,

> The miserable thinking and believing what men will is not permitted, nor any such retreat behind personal consciousness of duty. If this consciousness is no mere hypocrisy, in order that what the individual does should be recognised as duty, it must be recognised as such by all. If the people can make mistakes, the individual can do so much more easily, and he must be conscious that he can do this much easier than the people. (GP.I.MM.510–11/HS.442)

It is interesting to note how Hegel, in the above remarks, proves himself to be a greater master of the ancient dialectic than Socrates. In true dialectical style, the Socratic standpoint is reversed by means of its own principle. The principle of subjectivity, as expressed by Socrates, was that 'man must attain to truth through himself' (GP.I.MM.443/HS.386). This principle was held by Socrates until his death, in opposition to the views held by the majority. Yet, says Hegel, 'if the people can make mistakes, the individual can do so much more easily'. The mistake of Socrates was that he never allowed for the fallability of his method.

5. THE NECESSITY OF SOCRATES' MARTYRDOM

Unlike most prisoners under sentence of death, Socrates was given the opportunity to escape. His refusal to do so reveals that the decision to die rests firmly on his shoulders, a decision which he resolutely defended in the face of strong opposition from his friends. The passivity of Socrates in the *Phaedo* and *Crito*, it is often held, contrasts sharply with the defiant Socrates presented in Plato's *Apology*. In the *Apology* (29D) Socrates says that if he were discharged, but ordered to give up his philosophical questioning, he would disobey, whereas in the *Crito* (50B) he argues that one should obey the laws even if, in a particular case, the decision was unjust or mistaken. According to A.D. Woozley, this apparent contradiction can be resolved if we consider that 'what in the *Apology* Socrates is

prepared to do against the court is not the same as what in the *Crito* he is not prepared to do against the court'.[15] Socrates' disobedience in continuing philosophy is nothing more than the attempt to '*convince* the state that it is wrong in the law or command concerned'.[16] The problem with this interpretation is that it presents a narrow account of philosophy, at variance with an understanding of how the Athenians saw the subversive role of the Socratic philosophy. By way of contrast, Hegel's Socrates reflects a watershed in the Greek world: his philosophical questioning revealed a lack of confidence in their institutions, and his punishment is to be understood in terms of a reaction from those who had identified the cause of their insecurity with the philosopher who had revealed it to them. To the Athenians, Socrates was a subversive and rightly punished, but as Hegel shows, he had merely given expression to an already subverted state of affairs. In contrast to Woozley's Socrates, Hegel presents the Socratic principle of rational subjectivity as it was experienced by the old order,

> not merely something new and peculiar in itself, but as an absolutely essential moment in the self-developing consciousness of self which is designed to bring to pass as a new totality, a new and higher actuality. The Athenians perceived correctly that this principle not only meant opinion and doctrine, for its true attitude was that of a direct and even hostile and destructive relation to the actuality of the Greek mind; and they proceeded in accordance with this perception. (GP.I.MM.513/HS.445)

The conceptual transformation, which Hegel sees in the Socratic revolution, is akin, in many respects, to what T.S. Kuhn has described as a 'paradigm shift' in the history of science.[17] Whilst Woozley's Socrates is a dissenter *within* a period of established ideas akin to what Kuhn would call 'normal science', Hegel's Socrates is caught up in a revolutionary transition from one paradigm to another. Adherents to the old paradigm saw, in Socrates, their fears of an undemocratic individualist 'puffed up by a good opinion of himself', which, as Hegel adds, 'proceeds from the consciousness of his own power to decide the good' (GP.I.MM.473/HS.412). But Hegel is equally aware that the subjectivism, which others (wrongly) saw as a consequence of the Socratic dialectic, was not the responsibility of Socrates:

> Socrates thus omits, in characterising virtue, just what we saw had also disappeared in actuality, that is, first the real spirit of a people, and then reality as the sympathies of the individual. (GP.I.MM.475/HS.413)

The privatisation of Greek ethics was not initiated by Socrates; he merely gave expression to a new way of thinking, which was reflected in a questioning attitude towards the old order. Social change was

therefore a reality before it found its philosophical expression:

The fact that the reality of morality had become shaken in the mind of the people came to consciousness in Socrates; he stands so high because he gave expression to what was present in the times. (GP.I.MM.476/HS.414)

Depicting Socrates as a harmless questioner, Woozley, like Xenophon and Plato, has done Socrates a disservice. Socrates' questioning had revealed some unpalatable truths concerning the weakness of the old order: its lack of confidence in family piety and the public religion. The fact that pious men, like Euthyphro, found it necessary to seek the advice of Socrates and subject their beliefs to his dialectical probing revealed, as Nietzsche shows, the decadence of the old order:

Before Socrates the dialectical manner was repudiated in good society. It was regarded as a form of bad manners; one usually was compromised by it. Young people were warned against it. And all such presentations of one's reasons were regarded with mistrust. Honest things, like honest men, do not carry their reasons exposed in this fashion. It is indecent to display all one's goods. What has first to have itself proved is of little value. Wherever authority is still part of the accepted usage and one does not give reasons but commands, the dialectician is a kind of buffoon: he is laughed at, he is not taken seriously. Socrates was the buffoon who *got himself taken seriously*.[18]

The harmlessness of the Socratic dialectic has been exaggerated by those who see philosophy as a trivial affair. Burnet has described Xenophon's *Defence of Socrates* as 'too successful', adding that 'he would never have been put to death if he had been like that'.[19] For Socrates, his execution for the crime of practising philosophy was the very factor which would enable such a defence to be written. By the manner of his death, the status of philosophy was enhanced; the strength of his dialectic was measured by the extent to which his enemies reacted. For Woozley, however, Socrates is a liberal figure of a twentieth-century university campus, insisting on the right to debate the rights and wrongs of a piece of legislation whilst continuing to conform to it. Commenting on Socrates' 'I shall never give up philosophising, and both exhorting you and demonstrating the truth to you' (*Apology* 29D), Woozley concludes 'This is civil-disobedience indeed, but of the kind that stays and attempts to change minds by reason and does not try to escape the legal consequences of doing it; not the kind that uses violence, or tries to dodge the law by escaping.'[20] Hegel, on the other hand, appeals to the kind of distinction one might make between criticism within a healthy paradigm, or political state, and criticism of a state in crisis:

According to Athenian laws . . . both these things done by Socrates (the charges of which Socrates was found guilty) were destructive . . . while in our constitution the

universal of the state is a stronger universal, which last undoubtedly permits of individuals having freer play, since they cannot be so dangerous to this universal. Hence it would undoubtedly in the first place mean the subversion of the Athenian State, if this public religion on which everything was built and without which the state could not subsist, went to pieces. . . . (GP.I.MM.507/HS.439)

The questioning of family piety and the public religion, however well-intentioned, struck at the foundations of the old paradigm. The threat Socrates presented was not of a revolutionary theory for the masses, or of Plato's proposed elite of philosopher tyrants, but the stark fact that the old ways had gone. The very belief that the fundamental ethical institutions required rational foundations revealed that their natural necessity was lost. 'Socratic virtues were preached', as Nietzsche once remarked, 'because the Greeks had lost them.'[21] The prosecution had deceived themselves into thinking that by silencing a philosopher, they could prevent a disintegration of their ethical paradigm. They were too late. Socrates was a revolutionary who did not need to escape. For Hegel, the philosophical revolutionary comes only when the revolution is complete – even though it may not have been fully recognised. The prosecutors of Socrates were ignorant of their defeat in the same way as the master in Hegel's dialectic of the master and slave was blind to the forces that would destroy him.[22] Socrates was aware of this. Xenophon records how, after receiving sentence of death, Socrates saw Anytos, his prosecutor, walk by and commented: 'That man is proud as if he had done a great and noble act by putting me to death. . . . He does not seem to realise which one of us had performed the better and nobler deeds for the future, and is thus the real victor.'[23]

If Socrates posed a greater threat than Woozley suggests, why did he submit so passively to the sentence of death? Surely this is not the act of a victorious revolutionary? Is this compatible with his defiance at the trial? What many commentators overlook is that Socrates had resolved to die, and that the arguments in the *Crito* were attempts to reconcile his friends rather than to present an explicit defence of his own position. In this sense, we can overcome the apparent contradiction between the passivity of the *Crito* and the defiance of the *Apology* without sharing Woozley's interpretation of Socrates as a campaigning liberal. For Socrates, submission to the execution confirmed the rightness of his defiance at the trial. His death was not so much an acceptance of punishment for conducting philosophical inquiry, as the conclusion of a philosophical argument in his favour. As Xenophon indicates with reference to the grandiloquent manner of Socrates' address to the court, death was what he had intended from the outset of his trial. In his *Defence of*

Socrates, Xenophon tells how Socrates, before the trial, had come to prefer death to life – how his *daemon* had opposed his defence[24] – and also records him saying, before sentence was passed, that he was prepared to end his life.[25] The important question, then, is not why Socrates refused to escape, but why he had resolved to die, for here we are confronted with the idea of a truth whose content can only be proven by the death of its possessor; not a truth worth dying for, but a death which guarantees its truth. Essential to the success of the world-view reflected by Socrates was the martyrdom of he who had given it expression.

In trying to explain Socrates' decision to die, philosophers have created a number of interesting confusions. One line of approach is to argue that Socrates was indifferent to the consequences of his actions; that if death were to be the consequence of pursuing his higher moral calling, then so be it. Andrew Barker thus rejects Woozley's claim that the consequences of disobeying the laws are socially destructive, and suggests that this is not Socrates' main argument at all.[26] The latter's position, he says, is found in the *Crito* (49 A–B), where it is held 'that we must under no circumstances do wrong'. This can be supported with other arguments from the *Gorgias* (489 A–B), where wrongdoing is shown to be independent of the consequences, but internally related to what is shameful. Barker claims that 'it is not the consequences of an action seen as something distinct from the action itself, but *what the action itself is*, from the agent's point of view, which determines, for Socrates, its moral content'.[27] But this appeal to the 'agent's point of view' is, on Hegel's interpretation, what the Greeks found objectionable in Socrates. 'Our responsibility for what we do', says Hegel, 'is a characteristic of modern times' (GP.I.MM.493/HS.423). But this principle, he adds, is never totally accepted because 'men are too easily convinced of having fulfilled their duty', and for this reason, Hegel concludes, judges and juries are appointed to make final decisions (GP.I.MM.511/HS.443). Even in a modern state, the freedom of conscience is governed by the parameters of the prevailing moral tradition. The Socratic appeal to conscience, says Hegel, had even less chance of acceptance, since the 'Greek world could not yet bear the principle of subjective reflection' (GP.I.MM.512/HS.444).

Even on Socrates' terms, a rejection of consequences raises problems. Drawing on Wittgenstein's distinction between ethical punishment and reward and worldly punishment and reward, Peter Winch argues that in the *Apology* Socrates' claim that 'a good man cannot suffer evil in life or after death' is a rejection of worldly consequences in favour of a moral absolute which is not 'contingent

on what may happen in time'.[28] This interpretation certainly finds support in Socrates' claim in the *Apology*, that 'the really important thing is not to live but live well' (30 C–D), and in the *Gorgias* assertion that 'it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong' (508 D). Both of these statements can be interpreted as an appeal to absolutes beyond worldly consequences. The problem is that the world is extremely hard to distance oneself from, and that other-worldly standpoints inevitably betray some very worldly commitments. How does one, for example, avoid cooperation with injustice if one passively accepts an unjust sentence? Other-worldly detachment would reveal self-deceit if one claimed that such a course had preserved one's moral innocence. The influence of Christian detachment and Kierkegaardian doctrines of 'patience', which is prevalent in the writings of Wittgenstein's followers, lends support to 'other-worldly' interpretations of Socrates' decision, but it should not be forgotten that Christ was concerned with consequences – the eventual redemption of mankind. Socrates, too, was concerned with the consequences of his decision. What Socrates disregarded, despite Plato's purificationism in the *Phaedo*, were not worldly consequences *per se*, but selected consequences such as his immediate extinction, or the consequential suffering of his wife and children.[29] That Socrates had anticipated objections on these lines is observed in his remark to Crito that 'it would hardly be suitable for a man of my age to resent having to die'.[30]

Throughout the Socratic dialogues a disregard of public opinion is stressed. This is partly to provide substance for Plato's critique of democracy, but it also reveals Socrates' concern with what posterity will think of him; for Socrates hoped that others would accept his moral teaching and pursuit of philosophical truth which, he consistently argued, was essential to the health of the state. To this extent his death was consequently successful: he was philosophy's first martyr, setting a paradigm of respect for truth, reason and virtue. If he were totally regardless of all consequences, seeking only the purification of his soul, he could have starved on a mountain top, alone and unremembered, but safe in the knowledge of his purification – all the greater a sacrifice for being alone and unrecognised. Instead he chose to go out in style, with due publicity. Not every political prisoner can guarantee the foremost thinkers of the epoch to write apologies for him. Dying to the self and purification are, no doubt, important aspects of the *Phaedo* and testify to Plato's Pythagorean influences. Equally important is Socrates' disregard for all but the highest virtues. But disregard is more selective than one is often led to believe. If a member of the crowd had hurled a

javelin at Socrates before his defending speech, he would have taken steps to avoid it. He was, like all martyrs, careful to select what should be disregarded. He disregarded, above all else, proscriptions against his philosophical questioning – 'the unexamined life is not worth living'[31] – in the knowledge that it was feared as a subversion of the Athenian state. Had Socrates escaped, there was a high probability that, as in the case of conscientious resisters to a war that is later recognised to be unjust, he would have been reinstated. The state may have apologised to him, and even paid the reward he had demanded at his trial. But this would have been contingent, a matter of probability. Socrates knew that in the manner of his death, the confirmation of his virtue would be necessary. By obeying the law and submitting to a sentence he knew history would pronounce unjust, Socrates achieved a moral and political victory over his prosecutors. The Socrates of Xenophon's *Recollections* was fully aware of the consequences of his death:

> If I am to die unjustly, this will be the disgrace of those who put me to death unjustly. If to do injustice is a disgrace, how could it not be a disgrace to do something unjust? What disgrace is it to me that other people could not decide or act justly in my case? I see that even the fame of our forefathers does not remain the same in posterity, but varies according to whether they suffered injustice, or else committed it. I know that if I die now, I shall obtain a different recognition from what the men who put me to death will receive. For I know that men will always testify that I never wronged any man and never made a man evil, but always tried to make my companions better[32]

This is exactly how the Greeks of a new generation came to see Socrates, and is how posterity has seen him. 'His own world could not comprehend Socrates,' says Hegel, 'but posterity can, in as far as it stands above both'[33] (GP.I.MM.512/HS.444). In Xenophon's account, Socrates refers to the future in more certain and concrete terms than he does in Plato's *Apology*:

> But nevertheless, I must not be less proud because I die unjustly. This is a disgrace to those who condemned me, not to me! Yet Palamedes, who came to a similar end, consoles me. For still, even to this day, he is honoured with much more beautiful hymns than Odysseus, who unjustly slew him. I know that the future and the past will testify that I never wronged anyone and never made a man evil. . . .[34]

Hegel, who presents the trial and death of Socrates as a clash between two ethical world-views, sees in Socrates' appeal to posterity an ultimate reconciliation of tragic conflict wherein the right of Socrates will be vindicated. The participants in such a conflict are not always aware of the wider issues and the process of social change within which their dispute is but a one-sided contribution. Only the historian of philosophy, possessed with the hindsight of the present, can offer a complete picture of the unfolding tragedy.

Socrates knew this. He was aware that the owl of Minerva had taken flight. Despite his refusal to play the rhetorician to the jury, he played it to the gallery of posterity. The death of Socrates was a consequence of the seriousness of the threat he represented and it was necessary for the success of his principle. Anything demanding less than death would not have fulfilled the criterion for revolutionary change. Socrates knew this, and for this reason resolved to die.

Presenting the trial and death of Socrates in this manner, Hegel draws attention to a logical bond between the success of a new shape of consciousness and the death of he who gives it expression. Martyrdom is portrayed as a logically necessary precondition of social revolution. To grasp this point is to see how many martyrs have gone to their deaths confident of the victory which they have scored over their opponents. Consider the optimism of Sacco and Vanzetti who, when they received their death sentence, replied:

> If it had not been for these things I might have to live out my life talking at street corners to scorning men. I might have died unmarked, unknown, a failure. Now we are not a failure. This is our career and our triumph. Never in our full life could we hope to do such work for tolerance, for justice, for man's understanding of man as we now do by accident. Our words – our lives – our pains – nothing! The taking of our lives – lives of a good shoemaker and a poor fish peddler – all! The last moment belongs to us – that agony is our triumph.[35]

This optimism was not the optimism of the crucifixion which anticipates eternal life and the conquest of death. On the contrary, the objectives of Sacco and Vanzetti were secular. Moreover, they were not seeking purification, nor were they expecting any last minute arrival of a revolutionary army, but they were convinced that their principles expressed a standpoint that could be realised and that the state, by sentencing them to death, had paid them the compliment of recognising this truth. Such optimism is not simply because of the sentiments that can arise over the cruel nature of their death, however influential that may be. The force of such sentiment is contingent whereas the necessity of martyrdom is logically related to the success of the social revolution. Until the threat of revolution is serious enough to create martyrs, it cannot be considered a serious revolution. Only a cause with credibility can have martyrs. The execution of Socrates thus heralded the beginning of the new era. The old order had duly recognised the forces that were to replace it. In the voice of Socrates, philosophy had arrived when the old order was finished. In time, the executioners were to be tried, found guilty according to the new standards, and despatched accordingly.

It is not suggested that revolutionary movements, and exponents

of new paradigms together with martyrs, are destined to supersede their predecessors. It is equally possible for the old order to suppress or recuperate them and survive without drastic alteration. If it is simply suppressed, the revolutionary movement will only be seen as a criminal organisation justly put down.

6. DIALECTIC AND TRAGEDY

> All tragedy depends on an insoluble conflict As soon as harmony is obtained or becomes a possibility, tragedy vanishes. (Goethe)[36]

Unless we interpret the drama of Socrates' trial and death in terms of shapes of consciousness at the point of transition, we would have to conclude that the accusers of Socrates were executed and exiled because the Greek consciousness had succumbed in a wave of remorse. To a certain extent this is true, but the question remains that if Socrates was clearly guilty of the charges brought against him, why should anyone feel remorse over the consequences? Why the need to punish his accusers?

What had actually happened was that in punishing his accusers, the Athenian consciousness had, in effect, transcended the old shape of consciousness and had therefore seen the punishment of Socrates as a threat to the new principle. Just as the old order had to engage in a struggle unto death with the new, so did the ascendent consciousness battle with the old order. To speak solely of a society that had simply regretted one unjust action is to misrepresent the milieu in which the trial and death of Socrates took place. Hegel presents the situation as follows:

> In that they repudiated the just judgment of Socrates, it seems to be implied that they had wished that it had not occurred. But from the regret, it does not follow that in itself it should not have occurred, but only that it should not have happened for their consciousness. (GP.I.513/HS.445)

Because the Socratic principle became the essence of the new shape of consciousness, his death was seen as a tragedy. And precisely because it was a tragedy, the possibility of it being an injustice inflicted by evil men is ruled out. 'An innocent man who comes off badly is a simpleton', says Hegel (GP.I.MM.513/HS.446), and there is nothing tragic about the punishment of the innocent; it is simply wrong and unfortunate. Socrates' tragedy is not a misfortune – although in every tragedy there has to be an element of misfortune.

The tragedy of Socrates lay in the fact that his misfortune was rational – brought about by the strength of his own will pitted against the moral will of others. It lies in the clash of two rights, which, according to Hegel, lies in the essence of all that is truly tragic in *Antigone*, his paradigm of tragic conflict. Thus, in classifying the death of Socrates as tragic, Hegel insists that 'in what is truly tragic there must be valid moral powers on both sides which come into collision' (GP.I.MM.514/HS.445).

An understanding of the relationship between the dialectic of history and Hegel's conception of tragic collision is best approached through Aristotle, who first defined tragedy in the *Poetics*:

> Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; with ingredients arousing pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of the emotions.[37]

For Aristotle the most powerful elements of emotional interest in tragedy stem from (a) reversal (*peripeteia*) and (b) recognition (*anagnorisis*). An example of reversal is seen when the messenger in *Oedipus Rex* arrives to cheer Oedipus up, but produces the opposite effect by revealing his true identity. On the other hand, 'recognition' refers to that transition from ignorance to knowledge, the best form being that which coincides with reversal, as in *Oedipus Rex*. 'Reversal' and 'recognition' play an important role in Hegel's account of history's dialectic, and are well illustrated in the despair of the Stoic in the *Phenomenology* on the recognition of his lack of real freedom, which moves him tragically through the standpoint of the Unhappy Consciousness to an ultimate surrender to an impersonal God. Throughout the *Phenomenology*, one encounters shapes of consciousness that pass into their antithesis when their content is fully recognised. Whilst Hegel's conception of tragic conflict retains Aristotle's reversal and recognition, it nevertheless differs in many ways. For example, Hegel's account does not always depend on a transition from happiness to misery, but is essentially optimistic, since a tragic collision may indicate the nature of a higher reconciliation in another shape of consciousness. As a matter of fact, says Hegel, that which is transcended in the tragic exit is merely the *one-sided* particularity which was unable to accommodate itself to this harmony. Tragic conflict is bound up with the dialectic of history and is intimately bound up with moral conflict, with real human struggles, and with their overcoming in everyday life.[38]

In the *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Hegel singles out Antigone as one

of the best examples of tragedy. Here we have the three main factors of tragic conflict; pursuit of an objective right, collision and reconciliation. The two opposing rights are respect for public law and familial love and duty. Both are virtuous ends; both are recognised as such by their representatives, Creon and Antigone. 'Within a collision of this kind', says Hegel, 'both sides of the contradiction, taken by themselves, are *justified*; yet on the other hand, they tend to carry into effect the true and positive content of their end . . . merely as the negation and *violation* of the other equally justifiable power' (A.III.MM.523). As in the opening sections of Spirit in the *Phenomenology*, the tragedy of Antigone provides the setting for the dialectic between family and state. Devotion to the ideals of family duty and public duty are recognised as good in themselves, but when pursued to the exclusion of other moral duties, they reveal themselves as imperfect abstractions from life's complexity, bringing the agents into conflict with other values. She who puts her family first may be morally commendable, but if this is pursued to the point where other rights are negated, her actions are not worthy of moral praise. To the person with no moral dilemmas there can be no moral satisfaction, only a sense of duty fulfilled. Both Creon and Antigone represent morally commendable positions, yet both are pushed to the point where they negate each other, leading to what Hegel describes as a 'self-division of the ethical substance'. Both Creon and Antigone have to fall; only eternal justice is vindicated.

Before examining what Hegel means by the vindication of eternal justice, it is important to reply to the objection that *Antigone* is not about a clash of two rights. Was not Creon a tyrant, an evil man who should be defied? How can he personify an equal good to that of Antigone?[39] The fact is that Creon is only the average official, the carrier out of law, order, and routine. In normal times, he would have been regarded as a model ruler, always setting the public interest above his own or his family's. He shows no nepotism or desire for personal glory or wealth. He speaks solely of duty to the state, to which he is completely devoted. He is not an evil man, but an official hardened by crisis. He is blind in the pursuit of his duty; if opposed, he suspects sedition or corruption. Like his modern counterpart, he cannot imagine anyone with different objectives than his own, except those who have been influenced by treachery or bribery. He is deeply suspicious of politically motivated men, since for him there is no need for dissension if one seeks only the good of the nation as a whole. This is his tragic flaw: rather than forsake law and order, he will desecrate altars and temples. He typifies official fears of the subversive, and this is how Antigone,

in her opposition to him, is able to indicate to the chorus and to the common people a higher ethical standpoint.

The vindication of justice from this higher standpoint involves Hegel's third element of tragic conflict, reconciliation. So far, we have considered only the agents concerned in a tragic conflict, but collision and reconciliation involve the feelings of the audience. The misfortune arising from a collision of right with right arouses more than 'pity and fear'; it arouses a feeling of justice and goodness in the audience, the comprehension of which brings about the reconciliation. Unlike the agents involved in a tragic collision, the audience has access to the total situation from which the agents have only abstracted one part. Tragedy presupposes a wider context, beyond the reach of the agents who blindly pursue their one-sided versions of the good. This positive side is not fully developed within the tragedy itself; it is left to the audience, to posterity, for completion. If it is lacking, the tragedy is meaningless; it is merely a pitiful tale. Behind our sympathy with the tragic hero, there has to be a feeling of a greater good which the hero has failed to grasp. Indeed, his fall is a vindication of that greater truth, which is essential to the ethical reconciliation.[40] Tragedy is neither horrific nor shocking, but, according to Hegel, we are moved to reflect upon a reconciliation of the principles involved in the collision. The element of necessity involved in tragedy stems from the urge to harmonise the principle of the good which is divided against itself in both agents. Insofar as tragic conflict captures the spirit of Hegel's approach to the dialectic of history, the latter is not merely an account of personal sufferings which cannot be made good. Unless history is seen to exhibit a purpose, it is merely a disconnected collection of hardluck stories. The above analogy with tragic conflict reveals how Hegel saw the movement of one-sided shapes of consciousness towards completeness. Whilst the tragic collision may be catastrophic to the mind that experiences it, from a later standpoint it can be seen as a continuous development of truth through its conceptual transformations. When viewed from a distance, even the most earth-shattering revolution reveals a much greater link with the past than it appeared to its participants.

In the events culminating in the trial and death of Socrates, 'Two opposed rights came into collision and one destroyed the other' (GP.I.MM.514/HS.446). But insofar as Socrates 'gave expression to what was present in the times', it is even more significant because it depicts the tragedy of Greece itself.[41] And if tragic collision characterises the conceptual transformations of human history, it

must also characterise the essence of philosophy, which reflects in thought the clash of rights, standards, or paradigms, which serve, at any given moment, as the limits of reason and virtue. Hegel's dialectic of history is no more and no less than a philosophical reflection upon clashes between different standpoints throughout human history. The trial and death of Socrates therefore provides Hegel with an opportunity to offer a concrete content to his metaphor of the bud and the flower.

PART THREE

THE FOUNDATIONS OF LANGUAGE

CHAPTER IV

LANGUAGE AND EMPIRICAL REALISM

> Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language. For it cannot give it any foundation either. (Wittgenstein, PI.124)

1. OBJECTIVE FOUNDATIONS

One of the consequences of the 'linguistic revolution' in Anglo-Saxon philosophy is the criticism levelled at empiricist accounts of the foundations of language. A number of writers have drawn attention to similarities between Hegel's rejection of the empiricist account of language and meaning and the contemporary rejection of the concern with sensory foundations.[1] In the opening chapters of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel combats assumptions common to the logical atomists concerning the foundations of language, arguing that participation in the universal is epistemologically prior to the alleged immediacy of sensory particulars. 'This bare fact of certainty', he says, 'is really and admittedly the abstractest and poorest kind of truth' (PG.MM.82/B.149). Now, Hegel must not be interpreted as meaning that sensory experience has no role in the acquisition of language. Hegelian idealism does not belittle the experience of the senses. In *The Logic of Hegel*, for example, he recognises the relevance of the sense organs, but adds that sense is not the 'only source of materialised conceptions'. 'There are', he says , 'conceptions constituted by materials emanating from self-conscious thought, such as those of law, morality, religion, and even of thought itself, and it requires some effort to detect wherein lies the difference between such conceptions and thoughts having the same import' (Enz.I.20). Critical of sensory realism, Hegel argues that sense-experience itself depends upon a wealth of culture and training, and to deny this is to engage in an 'abstract' enterprise which illicitly ignores the background of culture and training against which a reference to sense-immediacy is made possible. Hegel therefore opens the first chapter of the *Phenomenology* with an examination of the empiricist account of language and knowledge, drawing attention to the kind of assump-

tion that Wittgenstein detected in the sensory realism of Russell. This assumption, which can be called 'the proper name theory of language', is expressed by Russell as follows:

> The only words that one does use as names in the logical sense are words like 'this' or 'that'. One can use 'this' as a name to stand for a particular with which one is acquainted at the moment. . . . It is an *ambiguous* proper name, but it is really a proper name all the same, and it is almost the only thing I can think of that is used properly and logically in the sense I was talking of for a proper name.[2]

Hegel's point is that words like 'This' or 'I' are universal, 'that all that is expressed in language must be universal', expressing 'nothing but universality' (Enz.I.20). As such, 'This'cannot be employed as a name for a particular of one's immediate acquaintance. In his rejection of sensory realism, there are, as we shall see, many similarities between Hegel and Wittgenstein, but Hegel's approach is different in that he is prepared to take this view more seriously. To understand why he does this is to understand something very important about the nature of his phenomenological method. What he does is to ask us to imagine that we really do come to learn of the world in the way that the sensory realist tells us. For example, the distinction between the 'I' that experiences and the datum of sense-immediacy experienced is presented, in the *Phenomenology*, strictly as it appears in the arguments of traditional empiricism:

> It is not only we who make this distinction of essential truth and particular example, of essence and instance, immediacy and mediation; we *find* it is sense-certainty itself, and it has to be taken up in the form in which it is there, not as we have just determined it. . . . We have thus to consider the object, whether as a matter of fact it does exist in sense-certainty itself as such an essential reality as that certainty claims; whether its essential concept corresponds to the way it is present in that certainty. We must not, for that purpose, reflect and ponder about it, but only deal with it as sense-certainty contains it. (PG.MM.83/B.150–51)

It is in this way that we can understand Hegel's claim that when embraced consistently, doctrines such as Hume's empiricism or logical atomism yield, with equal plausibility, their dialectical opposites. This is largely because opposing schools of philosophy, by virtue of the fact that they can enter into a discourse with each other, can be seen to share the same metaphysical position. Accordingly, the realist version of the empiricist/logical atomist thesis, with its emphasis on the object and its denial of the mind's contribution to the cognitive process, shares the same metaphysical position as the idealism and solipsism which place an equally one-sided emphasis upon the knowing mind.

2. REALISM

> The forming of the five senses is a labour of the entire history of the world down to the present. (Marx)[3]

Hegel's opening dialogue is with the sensory realist who contends, 'The object . . . is the real truth . . . the essential reality, quite indifferent to whether it is known or not' (PG.MM.84/B.151). A refutation of this position is not attempted; Hegel simply asks whether sense-certainty can fulfil its claim to provide an expression of foundational certainty. 'Sense certainty', he says, 'has thus to be asked: What is the This?' (PG.MM.84/B.151). What exactly is this object of immediate experience?

Over a century later, G.E. Moore's 'A Defence of Commonsense' provided Hegel with such an example of foundational certainty:

> It seems to me quite evident that 'I am perceiving a human hand' is a deduction from a pair of propositions simpler still – propositions which I can only express in the form 'I am perceiving *this*' and '*This* is a human hand'.[4]

Wittgenstein's objection that Moore's truisms lack a human context is fundamentally similar to Hegel's dissatisfaction with the claims of sensory realism. When Hegel asks 'What is the This?' (PG.MM.84/B. 151), he is highlighting the problem of giving an account of language in the terms of those who ignore the social conventions built into the act of communication and concentrate solely upon ostensive definition. 'This', for Hegel, is analysed in terms of the moments 'Here' and 'Now'. His point is that the expressions 'This', 'Here', and 'Now' do not refer to particular places and times but are, in fact, the most universal expressions of all.[5]

Hegel's approach consists in asking the following question: 'If it is in immediate experience that you find certainty, then tell me what it is that you know. And if your reply is, "I know there is a table in front of me", you are bringing in other matters. You are making a classification, correctly applying terms in a highly complex system of language.' The reply might be as follows: 'Well, language may be highly sophisticated, but what I know for certain is that object in front of me.' And so ultimately the reply is 'This', accompanied by a pointing gesture. Language may be misleading, but the gesture is held to be correct since it is somehow in an immediate relationship to the object. This is supposed to be the case with words like 'Here' and 'Now', which are alleged to make an immediate and unique reference to place and time. If I say that this stapling machine is

eight inches from my nose at 10 P.M. on the 18th March 1978, I have brought in a reference to the whole history of mankind.[6] So we refine it down to 'This' – the ultimate in particularity. But Hegel intends to show, in his dialectic of the 'Now', 'Here', and 'This', that it is the ultimate in generality.

A. *The Now*

Says Hegel:

> To the question What is the Now? we reply, for example, Now is night-time. To test the truth of this certainty of sense, a simple experiment is all we need: write the truth down. A truth cannot lose anything by being written down, and just as little by our preserving and keeping it. Yet if we look again at the truth we have written down, look at it *now*, at this *noontime*, we shall have to say that it has turned stale and become out of date. (PG.MM.84/B.151)

The position challenged by Hegel can be expressed as follows: The word 'Now' stands for a particular, namely the present moment, but like pronouns, it stands for an ambiguous particular because the present is always changing. The sensory realist claims to be experiencing an item of sense-certainty at a specific moment in time, so Hegel says 'Write it down now; a truth cannot lose anything by being written down.' But the trouble is that the content of the 'Now' has gone, it is now night-time. Implicit in this request is the fact that the mere recording of a datum of experience cannot serve as an adequate reference since something, not given in sensory experience, is required. The sensory realist who writes the word 'Now' on a piece of paper to designate the time of his experience must be prepared to explain whether his 'Now' refers to noon-time, night-time, or when. The 'Now' is 'determined through and by means of the fact that something else, namely day and night, is not' (PG.MM.84/B.152). Hegel's point is that with time, we make a necessary reference to before or after, which is not permissible from within the standpoint of sense-certainty.

B. *The Here*

Hegel's next move is to ask his protagonist to specify what he is pointing at; first it is a tree, but when he turns around it is a house:

> The Here is, e.g., the tree. I turn about and this truth has disappeared and has changed into its opposite: the Here is not a tree, but a house. The Here itself does not disappear; it *is* and remains in the disappearance of the house, tree, and so on, and is indifferently house, tree. The This is shown once again to be *mediated simplicity*, in other words, to be *universality*. (PG.MM.85/B.152–53)

Can we conclude that Hegel is denying the possibility of making any intelligible unique reference to particulars on the grounds that whatever we refer to with the words 'Here' and 'Now' and 'This' cannot be isolated because the world, and the particulars in it, are in a state of flux and can never be arrested? This conclusion is, in fact, the other side of the realist coin and is still anchored to the assumption that language is essentially a process of naming – albeit an inadequate process. This interpretation is advanced by Loewenberg, who suggests that Hegel's argument is based on the Heraclitean thesis that one cannot step twice into the same river, since time and matter are never at rest. Loewenberg says that 'an instant intuition simply does not endure long enough to permit its datum to be directly indicated: the datum indicated is but a datum of another intuition. How point to an intuited datum without freezing the intuition entertaining it?'[7] On this view, it would follow that Hegel is saying that our ordinary concepts of 'Here' and 'Now' and 'This' are somehow inexact–a conclusion drawn by philosophical sceptics. But this is not Hegel's position at all.

To understand what Hegel is doing, we must remember that he is thinking himself into the same frame of mind as the sensory realist who treats 'Here' as a proper name for a datum of sense and 'Now' as a proper name for a unit of time. If we take seriously the words 'Now' and 'Here' as proper names, many oddities must follow. For example, what are we to make of the distinction between:

i. 'Do it now boy!' and
ii. 'Do it at 3 P.M.'?

In the latter case, it is conceivable that one might point out that it is too late. But in a very strange sense it is always too late to comply with the first order, since a portion of time has passed since the utterance of the command. Nevertheless, if one replied that it was already too late because 'Now' has passed, it would be treated as the sort of triviality one might expect from a 'smart Alec' schoolboy. 'Do it now boy!' means 'get cracking', 'don't linger', and so on. No specific time is referred to. If the boy replied 'Which Now, sir?', his remark would be treated by his teacher as either trivially impudent or completely unintelligible.

Hegel's point, however, is that the question 'Which Now?' or 'Which Here?' has a very important philosophical significance when put to a philosopher who claims that space and time can be interpreted as a series of 'Heres' and 'Nows'. It reveals to him that something is odd about his conception of 'Here' and 'Now'. So whilst in ordinary usage 'which Now', or 'which Here do you mean?', has no

meaning at all, it does serve as a very important corrective to the speculations of philosophers.

C. *The This*

A similar argument applies in Hegel's analysis of 'This'. When a philosopher speaks of 'This' as a proper name and maintains that pointing is logically prior to the universal, to a framework of mediations, it is permissible, if he points to a pencil, to ask him 'Which pencil?' – even if it is in immediate proximity to his finger. For if he is saying that pointing and naming precede grammatical rules and cultural conventions, his isolated act of pointing and naming should be sufficiently clear. We reveal his presupposition by asking 'Which pencil?', feigning ignorance of all the conventions and grammatical rules involved. Hegel's argument here is echoed in Wittgenstein's attitude towards the commonsense realism of Moore. Referring to Moore's claim to know that he has a body, Wittgenstein says: 'If somebody says "I have a body", he can be asked "Who is speaking here with this mouth?"'[8] (OC.244). This is exactly what Hegel has in mind when he says

> it is reasonable that the person making this demand should *say* what '*this* thing' or what '*this* I' he means: but to say this is quite impossible. (PG.MM.87/B.154)

And:

> They 'mean' this bit of paper I am writing on, or rather, have written on: but they do not say what they mean. If they really wanted to *say* this bit of paper which they 'mean', and they wanted to say so, that is impossible, because the This of sense, which is 'meant', cannot be reached by language, which belongs to consciousness, i.e. to what is inherently universal. (PG.MM.91/B.159)

Having failed to find satisfaction in the objective account of the foundations of language, the inquiry focuses upon the subjective account. In this transition, Hegel demonstrates how easily philosophical doctrines pass into their opposites, how sensory realism passes into idealism and solipsism.

This is largely a commentary on the way philosophers proceed in an apparently contradictory way. For example, one begins with the ultimate of particularity and ends with the ultimate in generality; begins with what we know and ends with solipsism; begins with human culture and ends with what 'I mean'. In drawing attention to these features, Hegel's procedure consists of taking the realist seriously, showing how he cannot make a unique reference, cannot indicate what he means. Whatever he points to when he says 'This, here, now', we can always ask 'What, where, when?' This is because

his words and gestures are incomplete outside of a culture which in turn presupposes a highly complex learning system.[9] It is evident that Hegel is very close here to Wittgenstein's view that words have a meaning only within the context of a system of rules. But this is the very opposite of the claims of a self-consciousness to whom pointing and gestures are the grounds upon which the edifice of language is built, since it now appears that we cannot have the grounds without the language.

3. SOLIPSISM

> To whom does anyone say that he knows something? To himself or to someone else? If he says it to himself, how is it distinguished from the assertion that he is *sure* that things are like that? There is no subjective sureness that I know something. The certainty is subjective, but not the knowledge. (Wittgenstein, OC.245)

Hegel effects the transition from the object to the subject by means of the term '*meinen*', which quite clearly has a more personal connotation than '*bedeuten*'. The object referred to is meant in the sense of 'my meaning'. Thus having failed to indicate a particular of sense-certainty, Hegel's protagonist is portrayed in terms of a subjective appeal. We can imagine him saying 'Well, at least I know what I mean by this', pointing affirmatively. As Hegel says, 'the truth now rests in the object as my (*meinem*) object, or lies in what I mean (*meinen*); it is because I know it. Sense-certainty is thus indeed banished from the object, but is not yet done away with; it is merely forced back into the I' (PG.MM.86/B.153).

Realism and solipsism have traditionally been held to stand in strict antithesis to each other. But Hegel, like Wittgenstein, held that commonsense realism cannot provide an adequate refutation of solipsism. When Wittgenstein puts into the mouth of the solipsist the words, 'It is essential that the other should not be able to understand what I really mean' (BB.65), he is revealing that the solipsist is operating with a logical exclusion which the realist misunderstands as a lack of information. For Wittgenstein, the refutation of solipsism must consist in showing that solipsism is unthinkable. Hegel's argument is similar to Wittgenstein's, and it is clear, from the way he depicts solipsism as a development of realism, that the refutation of solipsism must also entail a refutation of realism.

In what sense do solipsism and realism coincide? For the realist, a solipsist is one who claims that another's experience is problematic. His response is to argue that no difficulty exists since we know, by

analogy with our own experience, what another person experiences. It is a matter of commonsense, he would say, that other people experience what I experience. But here the realist has failed to grasp that an appeal to one's own experience does not provide us with a criterion of the identity of experiences that make it possible to ascribe them to others. In order to provide an adequate refutation of solipsism, the realist must get at the roots of the solipsist's assumptions, but in doing so discovers that he adheres to them as well as his protagonist. According to Hegel, they both share the assumption that the only proper names are 'This', 'Here', 'Now', and 'I'. One might think that on the question of the 'I' they are further apart. For example:

i. 'There is no "I", only a bundle of sensations.' (Hume)
ii. 'You cannot be certain of anything other than your own mind.' (Descartes)

For Hegel, these are two variations on the same theme. One can either say the mind does not exist or the world does not exist. One is simply going backwards and forwards in the same dialectic. We have seen how the 'Here', 'Now' and 'This' of the sensory realists either refers to nothing or to everything; so it is with the 'I' of the solipsistic idealists. Cartesians assume that the expression 'I' has a referent, but the kind of referent it has for the solipsist is very much the same as the 'This' for the realist. What, for example, is this 'I' that is given independent of the world's existence? Suppose we admit the possibility of knowing only one's own existence; what description could anyone offer of such an experience? Hegel puts the following words into his protagonist's mouth: 'I am directly conscious, I intuit and nothing more, I am pure intuition; I am – seeing, looking' (PG.MM.89/B.155). In this way, we arrive at the assertion of pure immediacy. But a creature in this state cannot say anything; he cannot classify, compare, or individuate. He would be in a state of pure solipsism, akin to what Santayana once described as 'solipsism of the moment'.[10] Such a creature would not even know what this 'I' was, since it would have no relevance for him.

It is interesting to compare the solipsism of the exponent of sense-certainty with the tendency towards solipsism in Wittgenstein's *Notebooks*. In the *Notebooks*, when Wittgenstein tells us 'Things acquire "significance" only through their relation to my will' (NB.84), he is thinking of naming as an essentially private activity. In his later writings, it is clear that Wittgenstein had detected, like Hegel, the common characteristics of solipsism and realism. In the *Blue and Brown Books*, Wittgenstein argues that both solipsism and realism are bound up with the phenomenon of staring;

from a fixation with static objects:

Thus we may be tempted to say 'Only this is really seen' when we stare at unchanging surroundings, whereas we may not at all be tempted to say this when we look about us while we are walking. (BB.66)

If we remember that the sensory realist was snared into solipsism by trying to give a determinate account of referring, claiming that sensations were 'my own' (*meinen*) as he pointed affirmatively, we can see a connection between Hegel and Wittgenstein, who both maintain that solipsism has its source in certain assumptions peculiar to the standpoint of sense-certainty, that one can

bring out the relation between name and thing named by staring at the object in front of him and repeating a name or even the word 'this' innumerable times. (PI.38)

Once one thinks of how tables, chairs, or stoves look to oneself, one is half-way towards thinking of a world that belongs to oneself alone. Once started on the search for the absolute determinacy of sense, it is not long before one concludes with Russell that language is too vague to capture a precise reference, that 'only I know what I mean by "This"'. And so, like Hegel's protagonist, the early Wittgenstein adopted a psychological approach to the problem of correlating a name with its bearer, attempting to indicate what *he meant*, by pointing affirmatively saying '*Ich weiss, was ich meine; ich meine eben DAS*' (NB.70).

With uncanny similarity to the sensory realist in Hegel's experiment with the piece of paper, Wittgenstein imagines himself telling someone that 'the watch is on the table'. But, given the vagueness of language, how can he make a unique reference to it?

To anyone that sees clearly, it is obvious that a proposition like 'The watch is lying on the table' contains a lot of indefiniteness, in spite of its form's being completely clear and simple in outward appearance. So we see that this simplicity is only constructed. (NB.69)

It is then also clear to the *uncaptive* mind that the sense of the proposition 'The watch is lying on the table' is more complicated than the proposition itself. (NB.69)

Wittgenstein imagines telling someone 'The watch is on the table' (NB.70), but now his interlocutor asks him what he means by 'lying'. How can he fix the exact determination of this term? Only by saying 'I know what I mean; I mean just THIS', pointing to the appropriate complex with his finger (NB.70).

The assumption of both solipsism and realism is that what is sensed is in some way private to each perceiver. By challenging the solipsist to provide a content to his experience – namely his experience of himself – Hegel is challenging the very roots of solipsism,

for in the absence of a public language, the solipsist cannot specify 'what this "I" refers to' (PG.MM.87/B.154). Hegel's position has been brought out by P.T. Geach, who has argued that the use of the personal pronoun is a public activity. But what of those occasions when we use the term 'I' in soliloquy? When used in soliloquy, it is not used in order to direct one's attention to oneself. When I say, 'I am in a muddle', to myself, I am not referring to myself; in such cases the term 'I' is superfluous. In soliloquy, we can quite easily express our thoughts without use of the first person pronoun. As Geach puts it:

> The use of 'I' in such soliloquies is derivative from, parasitic upon, its use in talking to others; when there are no others, 'I' is redundant, and has no special reference; 'I am very puzzled at this problem' really says no more than 'This problem *is* puzzling' (*demonstratio ad intellectum* again).[11]

Unless we are familiar with language, with the universal, we can have no use for the personal pronoun. The *cogito* held by Descartes as the foundation of knowledge and certainty is parasitic upon a familiarity with language and knowledge. Remove language and we cannot arrive at the concept of an 'I' that thinks.

Insofar as knowledge and language are held to be reducible to the contents of particular experiences indicated by the 'proper names' 'This', 'Here', 'Now', and 'I', there is little distinction between realists and idealists. Both remain in the same metaphysical ground, merely emphasising different aspects of an assumption which Hegel depicts as common to both of them; namely that thought and language can be reduced to particulars given in immediacy. Hegel expresses this connection by saying that both 'the "object" and the "I" are universals' (PG.MM.87/B.155). We cannot isolate the 'I' or the 'This' and present either of them as the foundation of language and thought. It is necessary to bring in something else. How much else, however, is a matter that cannot be settled by abstract speculations. The very attempt to isolate and refer to an ultimate particular causes it to evaporate into everything.

4. THE ADEQUACY OF LANGUAGE

Hegel's protagonist has one avenue left open to him: if he is to retain the cognitive primacy of individual sense-experience over the universal, that is, over the grammatical rules appertaining to a way of life, he must deny the adequacy of language. So the question arises, why not condemn speech rather than sense-immediacy? This is how

the problem appears to Loewenberg, who objects to 'Hegel's cavalier treatment of the claims for sense-certainty' which demand the 'sacrifice of experienced intimacy to descriptive propriety'.[12] 'Why disparage sense experience?' asks Loewenberg, 'Why not challenge instead the hegemony of thought? He who silently enjoys the sensible qualities of things cannot be charged with contradiction unless he stoops to argue. And if induced to argue, and to argue absurdly, he may refuse to graft upon his intuition the equivocations attending his words.'[13] But against Loewenberg, it is important to point out that the onus is on Hegel's protagonist to prove the inadequacy of language. He who does not argue forfeits his ability to convince. It is clear that language cannot be criticised in words:

> Language is the more truthful; in it we ourselves refute directly and at once our own 'meaning'; and since universality is the real truth of sense-certainty, and language merely expresses *this* truth, it is not possible at all for us even to express in words any sensuous existence which we 'mean'. (PG.MM.85/B.152)

Hegel is not accepting, as Loewenberg does, the existence of a strict dichotomy between experience and speech. Instead, he is drawing attention to the importance of language in the acquisition of elementary knowledge, and he insists that language, being universal, precedes the individual's sense-experience, a view which is echoed in Wittgenstein's 'It is only in a language that I can mean something' (PI, p. 18, footnote). The limits of language are the limits of experience; there is nothing external to language: 'What can be said can be said clearly' (TLP.4.116). One cannot mean something that one knows independently of language, since 'language as the universal simply expresses the knowing activity of consciousness itself' (PG.MM.91–92/B.159). Hegel's protagonist is prevented from saying what he means not simply because language is inadequate – if it were inadequate, his knowledge would also be inadequate.

There is a possible line of defence which Hegel does not consider: What of the objection that looking at language is really an indirect way of looking at the world? Might it be the case that language can never depict the world correctly, that language may somehow distort what is given in experience? This position is taken by R. Plant, who argues that in the *Logic*,

> Hegel's assertion of the harmony between thought and being, despite his dialectical virtuosity in an attempt to prove the contrary, remains a presupposition which is neither rationally checkable nor disprovable.[14]

Against this view, James Ogilvy has pointed out:

> The very idea of a global 'check' that would compare our logic against the real is superseded by the realization that every conceivable 'check' is and always has been

internal to the self-developing process that links the history of knowledge with the equally historical development of what qualifies as an object of knowledge.[15]

In this way, we find that the demand for a foundational 'check' on language falls into the logical circle of 'knowing before you know', which Hegel attributed to the Kantian critique of knowledge. For if it were true that a 'global check' were possible, how could we substantiate this claim? What kind of language would do the job? Parallels can be drawn between Hegel's objection to Kant's critical method and Wittgenstein's later criticism of the *Tractatus*. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein had attempted to discover the 'general form of a proposition', but his attempt failed to resolve the same logical circle which Hegel saw in the Kantian critique, namely that one must use language (knowledge) in order to examine language (knowledge). The attempt to express the essence of language cannot be expressed in language. This is why Wittgenstein eventually took it upon himself to describe the actual use of language. Another way of resolving the charge that language is inadequate is to ask whether there is an essential difference between finding out what a word means and finding out about the world. In an essay related to the present topic, Stanley Cavell asks us to imagine a situation where

you are in your armchair reading a book of reminiscences and come across the word 'umiak'. You reach for your dictionary and look it up. Now what did you do? Find out what 'umiak' means, or find out what an umiak is? But how could we have discovered something about the world by hunting in a dictionary? If this seems surprising, perhaps it is because we forget that we learn language and learn the world *together*, that they become elaborated and distorted together, and in the same places.[16]

Looking at language and looking at the world are similar activities. For this reason, Hegel's argument is not faulted on a contradiction between sense-certainty and speech. When Hegel says that 'language as the universal simply expresses the knowing activity of consciousness', he means that in the absence of language, we could have no coherent knowledge of our sensations. In this respect, he shares with Wittgenstein the belief that sensations are essentially rule-governed and are not the ultimates upon which language is allegedly founded. Hegel goes to greatly exaggerated lengths to justify his conclusion that objects of sense do not constitute the ultimate constituents of reality. In a rather bizarre example, he first appeals to the classical wisdom of the Eleusian mysteries, of Ceres and Bacchus, and he concludes by invoking the behaviour of 'dumb animals who fall upon and devour these objects' to illustrate his claim that 'all nature proclaims, as animals do, these open secrets, these mysteries revealed to all, which teach what the truths of the things of sense really are'

(PG.MM.91/B.159). Such examples testify to the seriousness with which Hegel combats the claim to ground the foundations of human knowledge in particular items of sense-experience.[17] His seriousness can be appreciated if we remember that he is combatting a tendency towards scepticism which lurks within sensory realism. Referring to his contemporaries, Hegel says: 'Of a metaphysics prevalent today which maintains that we cannot know things because they are absolutely shut to us, it might be said that not even the animals are so stupid as these metaphysicians; for they go after things, seize and consume them' (Enz.II.246).

5. LANGUAGE GAMES

There is a very close connection between the exponent of sense-certainty and Wittgenstein's famous example of the builders in the *Investigations*. In both cases a faulty account of language and reality is exposed. Wittgenstein's builders cannot be speaking a language; a 'language' confined only to one aspect of human life is not really a language at all.[18] Wittgenstein's builders, his 'imaginary' languages consisting only of orders, and so on, and Hegel's exposition of sense-certainty, are designed to show that the existence of language and society are necessary preconditions for any particular language game. The words 'Slab', 'Block', and 'Beam' of Wittgenstein's builders and Hegel's 'Here', 'Now', and 'This' are not ultimates of language to which we add 'Please bring me a Slab, here now.' Instead, they depend upon an entire system of human language and culture. To disregard human culture, as Hegel and Wittgenstein encourage their respective protagonists to do, is to commit oneself to solipsistic silence.[19] For this reason, a language game is given sense by virtue of the possible use of its expressions in other (albeit different) language games. This is essentially Wittgenstein's point when he says, 'I want to say: it is essential to mathematics that its signs should also be used in civil life' (RFM.IV.2). Unless the conclusions we draw in a piece of mathematical reasoning (or any other discipline) can have some bearing on other aspects of our lives, it cannot be called a meaningful piece of reasoning. That the component expressions can be used elsewhere gives them a point in mathematics. A system of knowledge must be capable of an exchange relationship with other systems of mediations. There is a parallel between the way in which mathematics depends upon an external use of its expressions and the way in which the language of the builders, or Hegel's exponent of sense-certainty, depends on an external use of

its expressions; the naming game of 'This', 'Here', and 'Now' cannot get started unless the expressions used within it already have a meaning outside of it.

For Wittgenstein and Hegel, there are no foundations for language and no foundational language games. Their alternative to a foundational approach is to describe the uses of language as it is employed within a given system of knowledge. This is what is done in Hegel's *Phenomenology* and in Wittgenstein's later writings. An understanding of the truths expressed by language does not depend upon there being a realm of foundational certainty, but upon a wealth of knowledge about human life forms. Here Wittgenstein and Hegel are in agreement. But it was Hegel who showed much more clearly than Wittgenstein that life forms have histories and prehistories. A deeper understanding of language depends on a wealth of knowledge about human history.

PART FOUR

THE FOUNDATIONS OF SCIENCE

CHAPTER V

IDEALISM AND ABSTRACT IDEALISM

1. ABSTRACT IDEALISM[1]

One of the major transitions in the *Phenomenology of Mind* is Hegel's move from *Self-Consciousness* to the standpoint of *Reason*. This enables Hegel to contrast his concept of idealism with that of his contemporaries and predecessors. Before approaching the standpoint of *Reason*, the dialectic of the *Phenomenology* focused on an empiricist consciousness in which the emphasis of certainty had been placed on the object rather than the knowing subject. The stages of consciousness organised under the heading of *Reason*, however, mark a change of direction. The development of consciousness is depicted with the emphasis placed on an active subject. Gone is the attempt to account for foundational truth in terms of sense-awareness, and with it the belief in a realm of theory-neutral data, or qualities received by a passive consciousness. Reason is the category employed, and this means that the philosophical expressions of the absolute will be idealist in form; that is to say, the philosophical propositions considered here will be those which occur within a definite body of knowledge. For this reason, Hegel wrote in *The Science of Logic* that:

> Essentially every philosophy is an idealism, or at least has idealism as its principle, and the question then is only how far it is actually carried through. (L.I.MM.173/JS. 168)

So if idealism is the correct alternative to the certainty of sense-immediacy, Hegel is therefore obliged to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate idealism. He therefore introduces the standpoint of *Reason* with a discussion on the various forms of abstract idealism held by his predecessors and contemporaries. It is, however, important to understand why the consciousness examined must be seen as a variety of idealism. In the initial chapters of the *Phenomenology*, depicted as '*Consciousness*', Hegel took seriously the standpoint of sense-certainty where it quickly became apparent that reality could not be grasped with conceptual tools based solely

on sense-awareness. At the stage of *Self-Consciousness*, Hegel revealed, in a vivid description of the 'struggle unto death for recognition', that the world is mediated through culturally significant symbols. But the assumption that knowledge and truth is a pre-social faculty, the possession of a particular knowing subject, persisted largely because of a rejection of the choice, which Hegel saw in the predicament of human beings, between lordship and bondage, to kill or to enslave.[2] A failure to face up to this 'social truth' explains why the runaway slave, or rather his philosophical advocate, adopted the ideologies of Stoicism and Scepticism, which culminated in the sorry condition of the Unhappy Consciousness in its attempt to discover its self-identity with a God that remained 'beyond, impersonal and remote from itself' (PG.MM.178/B.272). Out of the despair of the Unhappy Consciousness, a standpoint emerges in which it is proclaimed that the universal is not external to consciousness. Historically, this shape of consciousness is that of the Enlightenment, which culminated in Kant. Hegel characterises this standpoint with the expression 'Self-Consciousness is reason' (PG.MM.178/B.272). There is nothing transcending self-consciousness, even 'its hitherto negative attitude towards otherness turns round into a positive aspect' (PG.MM.178/B.272). But the truth of idealism, says Hegel, has been expressed in an abstract and one-sided manner. Satirising his predecessors and contemporaries, Hegel captures the spirit of abstract idealism perfectly. For this point of view, 'it seems as if now, for the first time, the world has come into being' (PG.MM.179/B.272). The world is the creation of consciousness, says the abstract idealist, and is therefore as real as *my* consciousness. If we examine this consciousness, upon which the reality of the world is said to depend, we discover that its content is not the empty and solipsistic 'I am I' of Cartesian thought, which 'withdraws from other objects that still hold their own alongside it' (PG.MM.179/B.274). On the contrary, the consciousness we are describing contains the existence of everything: if everything is mind dependent, then the examination of the mind is the way to examine everything. Thus:

> Self-consciousness, however, is not merely from its own point of view (*für sich*), but also in its very self (*an sich*), all reality, primarily by the fact that it becomes this reality or rather demonstrates itself to be such. (PG.MM.179/B.274)

It is clear that the consciousness before us is similar, in one important respect, to the subjective attitude maintained throughout the stages of sense-certainty, perception, and so on. It is the assumption that human knowledge is a faculty, or process, that can be examined in

the absence of its actual concrete expression. Moreover, the abstract and formal assertion of the unity of mind and its object can easily be read as a psychological discovery about the nature of the human organism. But this is to ignore the important fact that this belief arises out of and in response to the philosophical problems preceding it. Philosophical problems, least of all their solutions, do not occur in a vacuum. Abstract idealism involves the assertion that what is real is real only insofar as it is an object for consciousness. The trouble is that once this position has been accepted, the route by which it has been arrived at is forgotten. Consequently,

> anyone who has not taken this route finds the assertion unintelligible, when he hears it expressed in this abstract form – although as a matter of concrete experience he makes indeed the same assertion himself. (PG.MM.180/B.275)

2. TAKING SERIOUSLY AND TAKING LITERALLY

What Hegel has in mind is that the identity of mind and its object, which he believes to be the case, is not something discovered by empirical research into psychological factors, but through an exhaustive philosophical inquiry alert to, and in response to, those philosophical standpoints which have been investigated in the sections of the *Phenomenology* beginning with sense-certainty, perception, and understanding. Only after taking each of these seriously does the correct idealism become apparent. But when idealism is presented formally, it is with little wonder that the representative of the 'ordinary man' misinterprets it, thinking that the talk of an identity between the world and consciousness, with its correlative denial of a world external to human consciousness, is akin to a factual discovery which can be confirmed or refuted by the introduction of more facts. This gives rise to the kind of misunderstanding to be found in Moore's 'Refutation of Idealism', where he says:

> Idealists . . . must assert that what exists is *necessarily* so. And this doctrine they commonly express by saying that 'the object of experience is inconceivable apart from the subject'.[3]

To which he suggests that

> the Idealist maintains that object and subject are necessarily connected mainly because he fails to see that they are *distinct*, that they are *two*, at all. When he thinks of 'yellow' and when he thinks of the 'sensation of yellow', he fails to see that there is anything whatever in the latter which is not in the former.[4]

What does Moore mean by 'fails to see'? Is it equivalent to those instances where we speak of someone failing to see a car in the fog?

It should be clear that whatever is wrong with the idealist argument, it is certainly not a visual deficiency or a sin of omission remedied by a confrontation with the object, or by switching the light on.

Like Hegel, Moore recognised that there was something very strange about idealism, but unlike Hegel, Moore's refutation relied on an appeal to a standpoint outside of philosophy. Consider, for example, his 'A Defence of Commonsense',[5] in which he combats Bradley's thesis that 'time is unreal' by referring to the undeniable fact that his morning post arrived before breakfast. Moore has taken the idealist argument *literally* and has not considered the problems which led Bradley to conclude that 'time is unreal'. Whilst Moore asked why philosophers say such strange things, he never felt it necessary to answer why they held opinions, or asserted doctrines, which seemed incompatible with what they themselves knew to be true. His arguments (or 'refutations') went no further than pointing out that this was so. But the sort of puzzlement which causes a man to deny the reality of time has nothing to do with a misunderstanding of the facts, such as those occasions when we are said to be mistaken with regard to the correct time. In this respect, the defender of commonsense beliefs is as mistaken as the idealist who claims that his thesis is factually superior to commonsense.[6] Both have taken idealism's conclusions *literally*, but not *seriously*. To take them *seriously*, as Hegel insists, would involve a return to the 'forgotten pathway' of philosophical puzzlement or drive which led to these paradoxical assertions. It would involve the attempt to understand the sort of problems which the idealist sought to solve. We do not refute the paradoxes of philosophical perplexity by an appeal to facts, science, or commonsense, but by painstakingly examining the assumptions which led to the utterance of these paradoxes.

The major difference between Moore's and Hegel's treatment of idealism is that the former takes idealism *literally* and the latter takes it *seriously*. This can be seen in Moore's celebrated 'Proof of an External World', where he takes issue with the Kantian assertion that:

> It still remains a scandal to philosophy . . . that the existence of things outside of us . . . must be accepted merely on *faith*, and that, if anyone thinks good to doubt their existence, we are unable to counter his doubts by any unsatisfactory proof.[7]

Now Moore, as is well known, undertook to provide a proof of the existence of 'things outside of us', holding that it 'is a matter of some importance and also a matter which falls within the province of philosophy, to discuss the question what sort of proof, if any, can

be given of "the existence of things outside of us"'.[8] But his 'proof' consisted of a departure from the 'province of philosophy' for, against 'Kantian Idealism', Moore appealed to commonsense:

> if I can prove that there exist now both a sheet of paper and a human hand, I shall have proved that there are now 'things outside of us'.[9]

Holding up his hands saying, 'Here is one hand' and 'Here is another', Moore felt that he was proving '*ipso facto* the existence of external things',[10] and furthermore he believed that this proof was perfectly rigorous. In this way, he saw himself removing the 'scandal' of which Kant had complained. Yet clearly Kant was not under the mistaken apprehension that he might not have a pair of hands. No idealist has ever genuinely doubted the existence of such fundamental features, nor have they sought the kind of 'proof' that Moore had to offer. And since no one ever demands a proof of the existence of their hands or bodies or any of the other truisms at Moore's disposal, it follows that Moore's 'proof' itself is a departure from what is normally considered to be a method of proving anything. In contrast to Moore, Hegel's argument is that the mere pointing out of what is regarded as obvious, or immediate, does not get at the roots of sceptical idealism. To take the idealist *literally* is to take him at his word in a superficial sense. It is to see him denying obvious facts, such as the fact that Moore has a pair of hands. But to take him *seriously* is to enter into the arena of philosophical puzzlement with him. His remarks demand an understanding of the problem he is either struggling with or satisfied that he has solved. On the other hand if, after discussing his views and proving their incorrectness to him, engaging his assent at each stage, one discovers that Moore's sceptic is still unconvinced, then it will not be of any additional help to offer the kind of proof that Moore has to offer. We may need to develop better arguments or conclude that the situation is beyond hope. In the process, we may come to accept his position, but that is another matter.

The concept of taking *seriously*, or sharing the 'highway of despair' with the philosopher, is an essential characteristic of Hegel's descriptive-phenomenological method. According to Kaufmann, the following quotation from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* expresses the heart of the dialectic:

> Not to keep from error, is the duty of the educator of men, but to guide the erring one, even to let him swill his error out of full cups – that is the wisdom of teachers. Whoever merely tastes of his error will keep house with it a long time . . . but whoever drains it completely will have to get to know it unless he be insane.[11]

Kaufmann, who interprets the dialectic of the *Phenomenology* as a 'logic of passion', adds:

> Those who nibble at a philosophical position may never get beyond it, while those who take it even more seriously than its creator did and push it to its final consequences will get to know it and pass through it to a more mature position, propelled higher and higher by their very seriousness.[12]

It is no accident that the chief exponent of literalism, G.E. Moore, shares many of the foundational and atomistic assumptions of sense-certainty. Literalism, in fact, involves a procedure of abstracting certain propositions from a philosophical system in such a way that the rest of the system appears to stand in a contingent relation to them. In this respect, Moore's 'refutations', consisting of the assertions of sense-certainty, bear a logical resemblance to the atomistic programme depicted at the outset of the *Phenomenology*. It is precisely this failure to see the connections between the various utterances of philosophers and the systems in which they are uttered which marks the literalist off from the organismic and systematic approach of Hegel. To take a philosophical standpoint *seriously* is to pursue its logic, to see how it connects up with other aspects of knowledge. It is to recognise that the history of philosophy expresses a unity; that philosophical utterances are not 'chance events' akin to the adventures of 'wandering knights', but are part of a continuing conversation.

Now Hegel claims to have examined the course of philosophical puzzlement dialectically, as it has appeared throughout history in the works of philosophers. Beginning with sense-certainty and the attempt to impose a personal meaning (*Meinen*) on the objects of sense, the dialectical trail eventually arrives at the ahistoric idealism of his immediate predecessors, where 'reason appeals to the self-consciousness of each individual consciousness' (PG.MM.180/B. 275). In this limited sense, it proclaims consciousness to possess 'the certainty of being all reality' (PG.MM.181/B.276). According to Hegel, abstract idealism makes its appearance with the empiricist standpoint, for it is there where one finds consciousness uttering the 'abstract empty phrase that everything is its own' (PG.MM.184/B. 279). Here Hegel has in mind the Berkeley-Fichte thesis that things in the world are somehow my ideas and sensations. But what will demonstrate that they are mine? According to Hegel, by 'expressing things as sensations or ideas', the empiricist consciousness only 'fancies it has shown that abstract "mine" of consciousness to be a complete reality' (PG.MM.184/B.279). Berkeley's idealism, says Hegel, is merely scepticism inverted:

This kind of idealism is thus such a self-contradictory equivocation as scepticism; the difference being that whilst the latter expresses itself negatively, the former does so in a particular way. But it fails just as completely as scepticism to link up its contradictory statements about pure consciousness being all reality, while all the time the alien impact, or sense impressions and ideas, are equally reality. (PG.MM.184/B.279)

Whilst scepticism rejects all content of experience, Berkeleyian idealism swallows it up. If every impression belongs to consciousness, it would be impossible to know this fact. We can only determine what is given by consciousness by reference to what is external to it. And this 'other', claims Hegel, becomes an 'unknowable thing in itself', or that which is 'truly meant', but, like the bare datum of immediacy, cannot be indicated as long as we hold to an abstract version of the identity between thought and being.

These remarks concerning abstract idealism, however brief and inadequate, reveal that idealism for Hegel has none of the subjective characteristics which are usually associated with this standpoint. Because reason is conceived formally and abstractly, Hegel depicts the standpoint of reason in terms of a 'restless search, which in its very process of seeking declares that it is utterly impossible to have the satisfaction of finding' (PG.MM.185/B.280). It is, however, through undertaking a phenomenological examination of this search that the true meaning of the idealist standard of 'consciousness's certainty of being all reality' can be seen to 'raise its formal certainty into actual truth and give concrete filling to the empty "mine" ' (PG.MM.185/B.280). For Hegel, the correct idealism is not subjective, but is bound up with his view that the world is capable of being comprehended within the various systems of human knowledge. The correct idealism will therefore be attained after an investigation of the sciences. This investigation is conducted in the sections of the *Phenomenology* under the name of 'Observing Reason' and is developed further in *The Science of Logic* and *The Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*.

CHAPTER VI

THE METAMORPHOSES OF EMPIRICISM

> Is not any simple model and formula a sort of rape of nature, pressing reality into a Procrustean bed and recklessly cutting off what doesn't fit into the mould? The answer is that science in general consists to a large extent of oversimplifications in the models it uses. These are an aspect of the idealisation taking place in every law and model of science. Already Galileo's student, Torricelli, bluntly stated that if balls of stone, of metal, etc., do not follow the law, it is just too bad for them. Bohr's model of the atom was one of the most arbitrary simplifications ever conceived – but nevertheless became a cornerstone of modern physics. (Ludwig von Bertalanffy)[1]

1. OBSERVING REASON

In the chapter of the *Phenomenology* entitled 'Observation as a Process of Reason', Hegel is concerned with the assumption of an identity between the rational and the real. Hegel agrees with this position, but disagrees with the view that this affinity is demonstrable by immediate empirical observation (*Beobachtung*), which he represents as a form of seeing which has the advantage over perception (*Wahrnehmung*) because it is seeing endowed with intelligence. The observing consciousness is nevertheless similar to the perceiving consciousness.[2] The main difference is that the former, operating within what Hegel depicts as an idealist perspective, sees the subject and object no longer in opposition, but as complementary parts of an all-embracing consciousness. Nothing can have being, according to this standpoint, unless it conforms to the nature of the reasoning consciousness. Hegel therefore effects the transition from perception to observation with a curious pun on the term '*Bewusstsein*', placing emphasis on the detachable '*sein*'. The implication is that whatever has *Sein* (being) can only have it if it is a *Sein* which is *bewusst*.[3] From the standpoint of reason, nothing can have being unless it conforms to reason's own nature. The emphasis is now on the reasoning faculty rather than on the object confronting it. Within the standpoint of perception, the pun was aimed at the assumption of a sensuous given truth, but now the pun is directed at

the assumption of an immediate rational given. Hegel is therefore approaching the standpoint of immediacy at a higher level. This is in accord with his overall view that the history of philosophy represents a constant return to previous standpoints, each one, however, being more comprehensive than the former. For the observing consciousness, the world is governed by rational laws, which are immediately intuited. The question the phenomenologist must put to him is: 'How do you observe this affinity between the rational and the real? What is the basis of "reason's instinct" – the assumption of an affinity between the world and the cognitive apparatus?'

2. REASON'S INSTINCT: THE METAPHYSICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS OF EMPIRICISM

Many empiricists have rejected Locke's view of the mind as a *tabula rasa* whilst still retaining a commitment to the empiricist tradition. To the refined empiricist, the objects of science are not merely phenomenally present, since their presence alone is inadequate for the task of differentiating between the various objects of scientific inquiry. Scientific observation is recognised as a rational and highly selective process. The issue in question is not whether by phenomenal means alone we arrive at a scientific truth, but whether the assumption of a unity between the world and the cognitive apparatus, depicted by Hegel as 'reason's instinct', can be revealed from within the standpoint of rational observation. This entails the burden of proving that the uniformity of nature, or reason's rationality, can be observed with the faculties at the disposal of empiricist scientific inquiry.

One of the advantages obtained by Hegel's classification of rational empiricism as a form of idealism is the possibility of drawing attention to certain affinities between what might otherwise be seen as opposing doctrines. Consider, for example, how Russell's initial flirtation with naive realism arose out of his 'liberation' from what he saw as the idealism of Kant and Hegel. Yet, as Hegel shows in his discussion on sense-certainty, the attempt to consistently uphold the naive realist standpoint leads either to solipsism and the abandonment of rational discourse, or to the acknowledgement of a rational contribution as a necessary condition for knowledge. Russell's later adoption of a more sophisticated empiricism resembles the observational standpoint. We might say that some of Russell's mature writings resemble the sensory realist who has now become aware that knowledge is not entirely dependent upon the senses,

although from within the standpoint of observation, he still retains the empiricist assumption that facts determine theoretical constructions.

In 1948, whilst still committed to the empiricist and foundational programme for determining the scope and limits of human knowledge, Russell was asking

> how comes it that human beings whose contacts with the world are brief and personal and limited, are nevertheless able to know as much as they do know? Is the belief in our knowledge partly illusory? And, if not, what must we know otherwise than through the senses?[4]

And, like Hegel's observing consciousness, Russell acknowledges the contribution of the mind together with the 'idealist' assumption that 'self-consciousness finds itself mirrored in being':

> What we know of the world we know by means of events in our lives, events which, but for the power of thought, would remain merely private. The little dots that an astronomer sees on a photographic plate are to him signs of vast galaxies separated from him by hundreds of thousands of light years. All the immensities of space and all the abysses of time are mirrored in his thoughts, which in a sense, are as vast as they are.[5]

The world, assumes Russell, corresponds to a pattern which is somehow shared by the structure of the mind that experiences it. For this reason, the inquiry into the scope and limits of human knowledge will focus on the relationship between the individual and his experience. In this way, Russell reveals his commitment to the epistemological standpoint which Hegel has depicted as abstract idealism. Outlining his programme, Russell states that his 'central purpose' is to 'examine the relationship between individual experience and the general body of scientific knowledge'.[6]

How does the (abstracted) individual come to know what he does know of the world? Says Russell:

> What each man knows is, in an important sense, dependent upon his own individual experience: he knows what he has seen and heard, what he has read and what he has been told, and also what, from these data, he has been able to infer. It is individual, not collective experience that is here in question, for an inference is required to pass from my data to the acceptance of testimony.[7]

But something more than phenomenal experience is required to establish a scientific truth. Whilst retaining the empiricist principle that 'words which I can understand derive their meaning from my experience',[8] he recognised, as the exponent of sense-certainty came to recognise, that meaningful discourse presupposes a universal. For this reason, he claimed that 'we most certainly do need some universal proposition or propositions . . . and whatever these principles of inference may be, they certainly cannot be logically

deduced from the facts of experience. Either, therefore, we know something independent of experience, or science is moonshine.'[9]

According to Hegel, the philosopher who begins with the model of ostensive learning will eventually be puzzled as to how we can have knowledge of that of which we have had no experience. This may take the form of a search for principles of inference that allegedly justify all scientific inference. How do we obtain knowledge of these principles? How do we, for example, justify a generalisation such as 'Dogs bark' if experience cannot guarantee its truth in untested cases? Says Russell:

> But although experience of barking dogs suffices to *cause* belief in the generalisation 'dogs bark', it does not, by itself, give any ground for believing that this is true in untested cases.[10]

It follows, according to Russell, that:

> If experience is to give such a ground, it must be supplemented by causal principles such that will make certain kinds of generalisation antecedently plausible. These principles, if assumed, lead to results which are in conformity with experience, but this fact does not logically suffice to make this principle even plausible.[11]

Russell is therefore committed to a version of an 'innate ideas' doctrine, holding that 'Our knowledge of these principles – if it can be called "knowledge" – exists solely in the form of a propensity to inferences of the kind that they justify.'[12] And, 'it remains undeniable that our knowledge of them, in so far as we do know them, cannot be based upon experience, though all their verifiable consequences are such that experience will confirm.'[13] Like Hegel's observing consciousness, Russell assumes an affinity between the 'propensities to inference' and the alleged uniformity of nature. According to this assumption, human experience of the world is regulated by certain innate propensities, or inferential habits, which enable us to comprehend the regularities in the natural world. For example:

> As mankind have advanced in intelligence, their inferential habits have come gradually nearer to agreement with the laws of nature which have made these habits, throughout, more often a source of true expectations than of false ones. The forming of inferential habits which lead to true expectations is part of the adaption to the environment upon which biological survival depends.[14]

Russell therefore commits himself to the assertion of prescientific knowledge which, on Hegel's terms, would place him securely within the idealist camp.[15] And so Russell arrives at the standpoint depicted by Hegel as 'reason's instinct', according to which there is a correlation between certain regulative principles, innate ideas, and the laws

governing the behaviour of phenomena in the physical world; and that our knowledge of this correlation can be obtained from the observation of regularities in the world. Thus Russell argues that there are in everyone 'what might be called "habits", partly innate, partly acquired . . . owing to the world being such as it is, certain kinds of induction are justified and others are not'.[16] When we observe or reflect on such processes, 'we arrive at canons of inference which are valid if the world has certain characteristics which we all believe it to have'.[17] To support these remarks, we are therefore advised to observe the behaviour of the relevant phenomena in the world.[18] Russell's position is anticipated by Hegel, who characterises it as the 'observing consciousness', a standpoint firmly committed to the empiricist faith in the superiority of observational language.

Now, it is important to be aware that Hegel is not critical of observational and empirical procedures within the sciences. This, as we shall see, is evident from his remarks in *The Philosophy of Nature*. His criticism of the observing consciousness is aimed at the belief that the rationality of nature can be demonstrated by observational means. According to Hegel, questions concerning the rationality of nature are of philisophical origin and are not resolved by an appeal to the observation of nature's regularities. When one seeks to demonstrate a particular regularity in nature, it is necessary to accept that other regularities are occurring. Nature's regularity is not demonstrated; it constitutes the framework within which empirical investigation can take place. There are no foundational regularities. As such, the rationality of nature is an object of philosophical, not empirical, inquiry. For this reason Hegel argues that

> if reason probes and gropes through the innermost recesses of the life of things, and opens their every vein so that reason itself may gush out of them, then it will not achieve its desired result. (PG.MM.186/B.282)

It is not that empirical procedures are in themselves inadequate, but that propositions concerning the rationality of the world belong to the province of philosophical, not empirical, investigation.

Bound up with Hegel's recognition that nature's rationality constitutes the framework within which scientific investigation takes place is the suggestion that there is something mistaken in thinking that the scientific approach consists of the gradual uncovering of nature's secrets. Kuhn expresses this objection as follows:

> We are deeply accustomed to seeing science as the one enterprise that draws constantly nearer to the same goal set by nature in advance.
>
> But need there be any such goal? Can we not account for both science's existence and

its success in terms of evolution from the community's state of knowledge at any given time? Does it really help to imagine that there is some one full, objective, true account of nature and that the proper measure of scientific achievement is the extent to which it brings us closer to the ultimate goals? If we can learn to substitute evolution-from-what-we-do-know for evolution-toward-what-we-wish-to-know, a number of vexing problems may vanish in the process.[19]

Yet in a very important sense the idea of progress, like the assumption of nature's rationality, is built into the activity of science. When we engage in any scientific pursuit, we presuppose that nature's secrets are capable of being discovered. But, as Kuhn's remarks indicate, this does not have to mean that nature's secrets are 'out there' independent of the means of taking hold of them. One of Hegel's objections to reason's instinct, then, is the assumption that the objects of scientific inquiry are externally related to the process of scientific inquiry. According to Hegel, an examination of scientific practice should overcome the artificial barrier between subjectivity and objectivity. In *The Logic of Hegel*, he draws attention to a dialectical relationship between knowledge and its object in both religion and science:

Just as religion and religious worship consist in overcoming the antithesis of subjectivity and objectivity, so science too and philosophy have no other task than to overcome this antithesis in the medium of thought. The aim of knowledge is to divest the objective world that stands opposed to us of its strangeness, and, as the phrase is, to find ourselves at home in it: which means no more than to trace the objective world back to the concept—to our innermost self. We may learn from the present discussion the mistake of regarding the antithesis of subjectivity and objectivity as an abstract and permanent one. The two are wholly dialectical. The concept is at first only subjective: but without the assistance of any foreign material or stuff, it proceeds, in obedience to its own action, to objectivity itself. So, too, the object is not rigid and processless. Its process is to show itself as what is at the same time subjective, and thus form the step onwards to the idea. Anyone who, from want of familiarity with the categories of subjectivity and objectivity, seeks to retain them in their abstraction will find that the isolated categories slip through his fingers before he is aware, and that he says the exact contrary of what he wanted to say. (Enz.I.194)

In the following section, we shall consider how Hegel overcomes the externality between subjectivity and objectivity, avoiding the pitfalls of radical empiricism and conventionalism.

3. OBSERVATION AND SCIENCE

> Physics must therefore work into the hands of philosophy, in order that the latter may translate into the concept the abstract universal transmitted to it, by showing how the universal, as an intrinsically necessary whole, proceeds from the concept (Hegel, Enz.II.246)

The observer-scientist's account of nature's rationality reveals a commitment to assumptions concerning the relationship between language and reality which Hegel saw in the standpoint of sense-certainty and perception. Words are alleged to name things or sensations in a direct one-to-one correlation. Accepting the primacy of sense experience, the empiricist then casts doubt upon the significance of non-sensory concepts, which he labels 'theoretical'.[20] But, as Hegel argues, the empiricist's uncertainty over the universality of his sensory concepts reveals that a theoretical contribution is a necessary feature of empirical investigation. If nothing more than an awareness of distinguishing marks were important in the making of a classification then, says Hegel, 'we might, for example, take the lobe of the ear as the sign of man, for no animal has it; but we feel at once that such a characteristic is not sufficient for a knowledge of the essential nature of man' (Enz.II.246.Zu.).

In recent years, many of the cherished assumptions of traditional empiricism have come under attack. Perhaps one of the most fundamental empiricist assumptions to be questioned is that concerning the relationship between a theory and its empirical consequences. According to the standpoint of observation, laws, generalisations and so on, are alleged to have their foundation in habit-forming exposure to regular occurrences which, in turn give rise to expectations of future occurrences. In recent years, philosophers of science have asked what is so sacrosanct about the activity of observation? Why should we prefer to base the foundations of scientific truth upon observational judgments? Fundamental to the standpoint of observation is the somewhat dubious assumption that observational statements are preferable because they are theory-neutral descriptions of the world. This view has been criticised by P.K. Feyerabend, who argues that if we accept observational language as the paradigm of certainty, then we are free to adopt any observational idiom against another.[21] Why, asks Feyerabend, 'should we not invert our procedure and test Dirac's theory of the atom on the basis of an Aristotelian observational language?'[22] One should therefore expect to find conclusive arguments which justify the preference for observational language, and there has, in fact, been no shortage of empiricists willing to defend

the thesis that ideas are ultimately derived from observations. The problem is that there are as many diverse accounts as to how they are derived as there are writers willing to defend the thesis. One can argue that the problem can be resolved only on philosophical grounds—a position close to that of Hegel's—but this would involve a radical departure from the standpoint of empiricism. This lack of conclusive arguments in favour of the priority of observational language leads Feyerabend to conclude that the meaning of scientific language is not derived from observations, but from a 'theoretical context'; that observational statements are significant only if they are connected with theories.

Both Feyerabend and Kuhn have raised serious objections against the assumption of a factual core which is independent of all theory. For example, Kuhn invites his reader to consider what might appear as an elementary factual question: 'Is an atom of helium a molecule?' The answer is 'yes' to a chemist, but a physicist operating with a different conceptual framework would reply negatively.[23] Feyerabend suggests that if we examine accounts of conflicting theories, we often find that the decisive factors behind the emergence of a successful theory are not always the relevant facts. He argues convincingly that the eventual process of Galilean physics was not determined by the facts, but by the various propagandist moves made by Galileo:

> I suggest that what Galileo did was to let refuted theories support each other, that he built in this way a new worldview which was only loosely (if at all!) connected with the preceding cosmology (everyday experience included), that he established fake connections with the perceptual elements of this cosmology which are only now being replaced by genuine theories (physiological optics, theory of continua), and that whenever possible he replaced old facts by a new type of experience which he simply *invented* for the purpose of supporting Copernicus.[24]

Feyerabend's criticism of radial empiricism is matched by his criticism of the rationalist alternative which insists that instead of observational foundations there must be logical or methodological foundations. Having rejected the view that scientific theories are determined solely by their factual base, Feyerabend says:

> Turning to logic we realize that even the simplest demands *are not* satisfied in scientific practice, and *could not be* satisfied, because of the complexity of the material. The ideas which scientists use to present the known and to advance into the unknown are only rarely in agreement with the strict injunctions of logic or pure mathematics and the attempt to make them conform would rob science of the elasticity without which progress cannot be achieved. We see: facts alone are not strong enough for making us accept, or reject, scientific theories, the range they leave to thought is *too wide*, logic and methodology eliminate too much, they are *too narrow*. In between these two extremes lies the ever changing domain of human ideas and wishes.[25]

The alternative position adopted by Feyerabend is the 'anything goes' principle. This principle is advanced not only to break the hold of the observation-theory antinomy, but to show that '*all methodologies, even the most obvious ones, have their limits*'.[26] The question which this principle raises is: Has the moment of conventionalism been over-emphasised in the guise of unlimited spontaneity in the drawing up of scientific theories?

Now, Feyerabend's, and to a similar extent, Kuhn's over-emphasis of the moment of conventionalism is justifiable to the extent that they are combating the assumption that either the facts or the methodology determine scientific theories. On this view, however, little is offered to justify the success of a theory on anything more than pragmatic grounds. It is therefore at this point that Hegel's account of the nature of scientific theories can be seen as a contribution to recent discussions in the philosophy of science. On the surface, Hegel's concept of science has an ambiguous ring about it. This is because he emphasises neither the facts nor the theories, neither nature's necessity nor mind's conventionalism. It would appear, for example, that Hegel is endorsing the empiricist standpoint when he says:

> Not only must philosophy be in agreement with our empirical knowledge of Nature, but the *origin* and *formation* of the Philosophy of Nature is presupposed and conditioned by empirical physics. (Enz.II.246)

Yet in the following sentence, he appears to be endorsing the opposite view, that the truth of scientific statements is to be found in the necessity of the relevant theories:

> However, the course of a science's origin and the preliminaries of its construction are one thing, whilst the science itself is another. In the latter, the former can no longer appear as the foundation of the science; here the foundation must be the necessity of the concept. (Enz.II.246)

And echoing sentiments very similar to those of Feyerabend and Kuhn, he insists:

> All revolutions, in the sciences no less than in World-history, originate solely from the fact that Mind (*Geist*), in order to understand and comprehend itself with a view to possessing itself, has changed its categories, comprehending itself more deeply, more intimately, and more in unity with itself. (Enz.II.246)

For Hegel, however, knowledge of nature is neither necessary nor contingent, but observations and the theories we bring to them are bound up with each other in such a way that it is pointless trying to determine which plays a foundational role. We can understand part of what Hegel means with reference to the way J.J.C. Smart con-

siders the question 'Do electrons exist?'[27] They cannot be felt, tasted or observed in any of the conventional senses. In fact, knowing what an electron is depends on knowing something about electricity, cathodes, anodes, and so on. As Smart points out, it involves an understanding of the structure of the atom and possibly something about developments in quantum mechanics. One learns of the existence of electrons, not by mere observation, nor by speculative theorising, but by engaging in the activity of physics. A knowledge of the existence of electrons presupposes an entire system of mediations and knowledge of physics.

Insofar as Hegel's position matches Smart's, we can say that he is following the actual practice of scientists. Justifications in science rarely proceed down to observational terms. Scientific justifications can proceed in any direction, from the facts or from the relevant theory. But Hegel's position is more radical than Smart's, for whilst the latter dissolves the theory-observation antinomy with an appeal to specific fields of research, Hegel's concept of system extends far beyond the scope of any particular discipline. The various determinations of human knowledge are interrelated in an organic whole such that there can be no foundations. What counts as a foundation in one sphere often turns out to be a conceptual reformulation of what takes place in another sphere. Very often, scientific laws are claimed to be derived entirely from experience, uninfluenced by theoretical blinkers. But when we compare these laws with other events in the same epoch, such as cultural phenomena, political organisations, and economic institutions, what first appears as a description of an observed regularity often turns out to be a conceptual reformulation of an occurrence within some other discipline. Different systems of knowledge often reveal conceptual similarities. Consider how Darwin's theory of evolution was seen by Engels to reflect the model of nineteenth-century economic competition. In *Capital*, Marx draws a connection between concepts relative to a mode of production and the biological sciences when he says 'Descartes, in defining animals as mere machines, saw with the eyes of the manufacturing period, while to the eyes of the middle ages, animals were assistants to man.'[28] Modern cell theory is no exception; consider the following parallel drawn by Royston Clowes:

> Henry Ford discovered the secret of the variety and efficiency of living systems when he developed mass production. In the cell, as in the efficient factory, there exists a whole network of component production lines, each one made up of a large number of individually single processes. Each process is performed and repeated by a single enzyme (the worker), who produces a complex component which then passes along the line receiving at each stage a small modification.[29]

It would be interesting to speculate on the direction cell theory would have taken in the absence of modern industrial techniques, from which it derives its explanatory force. Scientific observations and theories are to a very large extent determined by pictures drawn from other systems of knowledge. Hegel's insistence that the 'foundation must be the necessity of the concept' is therefore bound up with his thesis that scientific truth depends on the interrelatedness of the various systems of knowledge within an epoch. A scientific discovery, for example, can only be said to have taken place when the relevant community are prepared to accept it. This means that they must be conceptually prepared to accept it—it must fit in with an entire system of beliefs and theories.

So whilst applauding Kuhn's and Feyerabend's rejection of radical empiricism, Hegel would not find the 'anything goes' principle acceptable. Whilst he sees scientific development in terms of a change of conceptual frameworks, there were certain limits governing its direction. Not anything will count as an acceptable alternative, although an element of contingency is always present. At any given time in history the range of options is finite. A lecture on the properties of transistors would not have been well received in Plato's academy, just as fifth-century agricultural knowledge would not be an acceptable option for a modern industrial society—although this does not rule out the possibility of learning something from different systems of knowledge. For Hegel, progress in scientific understanding is neither an accumulation of facts upon an observational base, nor is it characterised by the arbitrary and non-accumulative replacement of theories. The rationality of science is to be found in the study of its history, where similarities as well as distinctions are found between the various stages of scientific development. Hegel's approach to the philosophy of science can be described as a developmental one, in which theoretical transformation is comprehended in terms of a wider system of human interests. It is clear that Hegel's account of the systematic nature of scientific inquiry has its origins in a conception of an organic totality. In the following chapter, we shall continue our investigation of Hegel's approach to the sciences, concentrating on the organic sciences—which provide Hegel with his model of scientific inquiry.

PART FIVE

THE SYSTEM OF NATURE

CHAPTER VII

OBSERVATION OF ORGANIC NATURE (A)

If you want to describe life and gather its meaning,
To drive out its spirit must be your beginning,
Then though fast in your hand lie the parts one by one
The spirit that linked them, alas is gone
And 'Nature's Laboratory' is only a name
That the chemist bestows on't to hide his own shame.

(Goethe, *Faust*, I 4)

1. INTRODUCTION

The discussion on Organic Nature in the *Phenomenology* brings us to the heart of Hegel's conception of human knowledge and truth.[1] In a very important sense, the biological sciences provide a paradigm for the entire Hegelian venture. It is here that the concept of 'system' has its origin and it is here that Hegel must come face to face with the atomistic and foundationalist assumptions which have revealed themselves in all previous shapes of consciousness. In an early work, Hegel states his fundamental problem as follows: 'To think life, that is the problem'; to which he adds, 'the consciousness of life in itself would be the same thing as the consciousness of what is man'.[2] The section on Organic Nature, being ultimately concerned with living systems, is therefore one of the most important sections in the *Phenomenology*. It is here that we are presented with Hegel's conception of a living organism upon which his entire system rests. Biology is the science concerned with life. Questions concerning the status of biology are also concerned with the status of life. The problems which Hegel touches on in this section have a long history in biology, and like most philosophical problems are as relevant today as they ever were. Following the pattern of previous chapters, we shall draw heavily upon twentieth-century achievements in philosophy and the sciences in order to illuminate the insights hidden in Hegel's texts.

There are two major questions in Hegel's discussion of Organic Nature: What is the nature of life, and how does one classify forms

of life? The former belongs to theoretical biology, the latter to taxonomy, although both are interrelated in many ways. The answers, from the observational standpoint, following the tradition of classical biology, entail the assumption that life can be reduced to mechanical terms, and that various forms of life can be classified according to principles derived in accordance with strictly observational criteria. Hegel's alternative to the mechanism of observation is not the traditional vitalist approach, but a supersession of both schools along with certain assumptions of classical biology which both schools held in common.

Classical physics adhered to a static concept of matter and consequently saw life in terms of animated matter (mechanism) or animated matter guided by inexplicable forces (vitalism). The Hegelian supersession of mechanism entails a rejection of the static concept of matter, the assumption common to mechanism and vitalism. Rejecting the view that problems arising within the organic sciences are inexplicable in physico-chemical terms, Hegel indicates an approach similar to what is now described as 'General System Theory', regarding the properties of organic systems as a legitimate subject for science.

2. MECHANISM AND VITALISM

> From bacteria to man the chemical machinery is essentially the same both in its structure and functioning. . . . Living beings are chemical machines, and all organic systems are wholly interpretable in terms of specific chemical interactions. (Jacques Monod)[3]

To understand the complicated moves that Hegel is making in the dialectic of Organic Nature, one must be familiar with Hegel's answer to the question 'What is life?' This question is approached in the dialectic with the observing consciousness (hereafter referred to as 'the observer'). The progress of the observer can then be seen with reference to a standpoint which he has yet to acquire. This may appear as a departure from the strictly phenomenological method advocated by Hegel but, as long as the presentation of Hegel's own standpoint does not interfere with the presentation of the observing consciousness, the spirit of Hegel's method will be preserved.

The observational standpoint, derived from the success of classical physics, conceived of a world governed by physical laws explicable in terms of observable causal relations. The primacy given to observations of causal relationships was reflected in the way mech-

anics, in the post-Renaissance period, become the paradigm of scientific certitude, influencing every sphere of knowledge. The assumption behind this reasoning is depicted by Hegel as that of observing reason. It involved a static concept of nature, which is to be found in the theories of Newton and Boyle, according to whom natural laws and physical properties were permanent features of reality which the scientist had to search out. This view was questioned by Darwin, who saw change as a fundamental characteristic of life. Whilst Hegel preceded Darwin, he too was clearly aware of the problems surrounding the static concept of nature. He held that mechanism and vitalism were attempts to understand the nature of life from within the perspective of classical physics. We must therefore investigate these two allegedly antithetical opposites.

a. The Mechanist holds that organic phenomena are reducible to physical and chemical phenomena. The explanation of organic life does not require reference to any vital principles, since the laws, as they are observed in inorganic matter, are considered to be sufficient. Accordingly, the living organism is nothing but a machine, admittedly of great complexity, but nevertheless a machine. Such a view lends itself to theists and atheists alike. Theists, following Descartes, can see the organism as a machine constructed by God,[4] whilst atheists, following Darwin, see the organism as a machine created by chance and selection.

b. The Vitalist, on the other hand, denies that life can be reduced to physico-chemical phenomena, postulating a vital principle, which coordinates all activities towards the life of the organism. Vitalism infers the existence of a 'ghostly engineer' emphatically denied by the atheistic mechanists.

Mechanism, in some form or other, has generally been favoured by scientists ranging from Descartes to Jacques Monod, who claims

> Everything can be reduced to simple, obvious, mechanical interactions. The animal is a machine and there is no difference at all between man and animals.[5]

During the past three centuries, mechanism has been successful. Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood in 1628 was a successful application of mechanistic standards to biology, and marked the beginnings of modern physiology. The success of the physical sciences with heat theory, acoustics, electricity, optics, and so on, gave rise to the optimistic hope that one day the physical sciences could account for all natural phenomena. A breakthrough occurred in 1828 when Wöhler obtained urea by heating a mineral substance, ammonium cyanate. The laboratory production of urea made biochemistry the most promising avenue for the explanation

of biological phenomena. Subsequent experiments demonstrated that the synthesis of other organic compounds was only a matter of skill and knowledge. Nowadays, physical chemistry explains much about essential life processes, such as the action of enzymes, hormones, and vitamins. Drugs are manufactured in accordance with this knowledge and prescribed for nerves, muscles, and so on.[6]

Despite the achievements of the mechanistic view, it has never been wholly accepted that the essence of life can be reduced to 'simple, obvious, mechanical interactions'.[7] Descartes' Christianity forced him to admit that human 'machines' were endowed with a free will not subject to the laws of nature. Cartesian dualism was therefore seized by vitalists, such as Stahl (1660–1734), who saw the soul as the vital principle which influences matter, and governs the development and activity of the body. Stahl's vitalism was reflected in his defence of the 'phlogiston' theory, so when Lavoiser demolished this theory, the pendulum swung back in favour of mechanism.

During the nineteenth century, no more than three decades after Wöhler's experiments with urea, mechanism faced a serious setback over the controversy concerning spontaneous generation, that is, the idea that life arose from time to time out of non-living materials. Vitalists, maintaining that life arose only from other living organisms, found support in the experiments of Louis Pasteur in the 1860s. Pasteur was requested by the brewers of Lille to discover why the beet sugar had turned sour and was producing acid. He demonstrated that the process of fermentation and putrefaction in organic fluids is due to the presence of micro-organisms and is not spontaneously created in these fluids as the mechanists held. This was combined with developments in cell theory which indicated that cells could arise only out of other cells. By separating the yeast microbes from alien microbes which were overtaking them and producing acid, Pasteur was able to conclude that various kinds of fermentations depend upon the kind of microbe affecting them. Fermentation, he concluded, was a 'vital process', occurring only in the presence of living cells. But Pasteur was only correct in a limited sense, for in 1897 Buchner demonstrated that the active agents in fermentation, although produced by living cells, were themselves non-living 'ferments' or 'enzymes'. Buchner's experiment consisted in isolating the enzyme responsible for chemical change within yeast cells. This enzyme was then shown to be capable of promoting a chemical change without the presence of micro-organisms. Thus, a new era in biochemistry was initiated, and it is accepted today that even the most complex life processes result from series of such

chemical reactions, each one catalysed by a single enzyme, and therefore capable of being interpreted along mechanistic lines.[8]

Vitalism was to find its metaphysical expression in Henri Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, but received experimental support in the work of Hans Driesch (1867–1941), a rebellious pupil of the mechanist, E. Haeckal. What is most interesting about Driesch's experiments is that they reveal how closely vitalism is linked to the observational standpoint of classical physics—usually associated with mechanism.[9] According to Driesch, physico-chemical factors are insufficient for an explanation of organic life and one is therefore required to admit the existence of a vitalistic agency operating within living beings. This agency, to which he applies the Aristotelian term 'entelechy', is not a material reality, but a non-spatial entity which is capable of exerting its influence upon matter.

How did he arrive at this concept of a ghostly entelechical factor? Ironically, by the employment of the same observational methods as his mechanist opponents. Driesch's experimental observations were on sea-urchins. Having isolated and cleaved a single sea-urchin egg, Driesch tells us how he expected that

> the next morning would reveal to me the half-organization of my subject once more; the intestine, I supposed, might come out quite on one side of it as a half-tube, and the mesenchyme ring might be a half one also.
>
> But things turned out as they were bound to and not as I had expected; there was a typically *whole* gastrula on my dish the next morning, differing only by its small size from a normal one, and this small but whole gastrula was followed by a whole and typically small pluteus-larva.[10]

Imagine Driesch's surprise when, after having halved the sea-urchin germ at the embryonic stage, he found, not the development of half an animal—as the mechanist analogy would suppose—but two fully developed sea-urchin larvae. For Driesch, this discovery bordered on the miraculous since it seemed to defy the laws of nature. If only physical and chemical laws apply to organic life, how can a machine-like structure achieve the same performance as the divided sea-urchin germ? Half a machine cannot reproduce the other half. Comparing the product of a reproductive organ with a machine, he later said:

> But if all these cells were from one cell only, through division, then if the development were to be caused by a mechanism, the first cell should have contained that mechanism and such a mechanism endowed with an almost infinite complexity, should have divided itself again and again though remaining always entire. But this is absurd. No mechanism can be repeatedly divided altering its wholeness.[11]

Convinced that he had reached the limits of physico-chemical inquiry, Driesch maintained that the only way forward lay in the

assertion of a fundamentally different directing factor—entelechy—whose existence, or non-existence, provided a means of distinguishing between the organic and the inorganic spheres.

Several arguments can be advanced against this conclusion. In the first place, Driesch, like so many mechanists, was operating with a crude account of machines and inorganic matter. It is not absurd, as G. Blandino points out, that a molecular structure should influence other atomic groups present such that they will reproduce themselves:

> A molecule of nucleic acid in the presence of special enzymes, determines the synthesis of nucleotides which thus form other molecules of nucleic acid equal to the first molecule (cf. the experiments of A. Kornsberg who won, together with S. Ochoa, the 1959 Nobel Prize for Medicine).[12]

Driesch's difficulty was that he saw organisms entirely in terms of man-made machines whose constitutive matter did not conform with the laws appropriate to man-made machines. But it is possible to conceive of organic phenomena behaving in accordance with physical laws and still aiming at the maintenance of the organism. Chromosomes and nucleic acids conform with physico-chemical laws and still contribute to the maintenance and reproduction of the organism. The alternative to mechanism does not have to be the postulation of a 'ghostly' entelechy; the ghost is only necessitated by a static conception of the physical world.

Driesch's vitalism was based on the concept of restitution after disturbance. This, he argued, was incompatible with a machine hypothesis. But the vitalist thesis can also be reached by taking seriously the assumptions of its dialectical opposite. Suppose we accept that living beings are machines, albeit extremely complicated ones. Every machine implies a designer, which is why Descartes invoked a Divine Creator.[13] Nowadays, selection theory has replaced Divine Creation, but if the machine analogy is to remain, a directing factor is nevertheless required. And so we arrive at entelechy.[14] On these terms, mechanism, when taken seriously, leads to vitalism, since a purposive factor is presupposed. But if vitalism is taken seriously, much of science will have to go, since the practice of modern science presupposes that there are scientific explanations to be found, and science cannot rest with explanations given in terms of ghostly agents who invent, design, and maintain living organisms. Vitalism, then, is the other side of the mechanist coin. If one holds the machine hypothesis, one must accept the existence of a designer—ghostly or real. Yet explanations in terms of ghosts are unacceptable to scientists. Vitalism is the unscientific consequence of the mech-

anist standpoint, since vitalistic purpose is invoked to explain what is inexplicable in mechanistic standards. The phenomenon of self-regulation, upon which Driesch's vitalism hung, was inexplicable to the mechanist standpoint to which he found himself in opposition. For this reason the entelechical factor was invoked. But, given a more sophisticated concept of matter, we have argued, the mechanist could provide an explanation of self-regulation in physico-chemical terms.

In a very important sense, vitalism is negative and, as such, the history of biology has exhibited a constant refutation of vitalism ever since Wöhler demonstrated in 1828 that the production of organic compounds need not be a vitalist activity. Vitalism, by its very nature, clings to the x factor and, facing constant pressure from the desire for scientific explanation, must be constantly on the retreat. In fact, the refutation of vitalism is part of the in-built drive for complete knowledge within the sciences. Commenting on the motivation behind the recent success of molecular biology, Royston Clowes tells us that in 'the case of the molecular biologist this may be to refute vitalism, with the ultimate aim no less than a complete understanding of life'.[15] Among the promises offered by molecular biology, building on Wöhler and Buchner, is the synthesis of DNA; the *in vitro* synthesis of the hereditary material. Whether this would clinch the anti-vitalist case remains to be seen. On previous experience, it would seem that vitalism could still find some inexplicable factor to rally its forces behind.

At best, vitalism specifies the limits of scientific knowledge at a given time; at worst, it means the abandonment of science for ghostly entelechy. Hegel would well be replying to Driesch when he says:

> From the point of view of understanding, life is usually spoken of as a mystery, and in general as incomprehensible. By giving it such a name, however, the understanding only confesses its own finitude and nullity. (Enz.I.216.Zu.)

3. THE SUPERSESSION OF MECHANISM AND VITALISM

> There will come a time when the mechanistic and atomistic conception is entirely overthrown in clever brains, and all phenomena will appear as dynamic and chemical. . . . (Goethe, *Tagebuch*, 1812)

Do we have to accept either vitalism or mechanism? This is one of the questions Hegel sought to answer. He did so by challenging the premises of classical physics, upon which the dichotomy rests. Hegel's position can be understood with reference to the 'organismic

conception' of Ludwig von Bertalanffy, a view which may be subject criticism on certain empirical grounds, but which has the philosophical merit of refusing to 'consent completely to either of the classical views, but transcends both in a new and third one'.[16] According to Bertalanffy, the classical tradition was characterised by three leading ideas, each borrowed from the physical sciences: They are (A) analytic and summative, (B) machine theoretical and (C) reaction theoretical conceptions. All three are superseded in what he describes as an 'organismic conception'.

A. *The analytic and summative approach*

This approach consisted of breaking down the organism into its component parts, just as physical properties can be broken into atoms and molecules.[17] According to the classical cell theory, the cell was the basic unit of life; an organism would be an aggregate of such units, any part of which could be isolated and analysed. The nervous system, for example, was seen as an apparatus established for various functions; the muscular and reproductive organs were likewise held to be isolable and subject to analysis. Analytic and summative methods are in character with each standpoint adopted by the atomistic empiricism against which Hegel develops his concept of system. It is not surprising, therefore, to discover its expression in the writings of Russell. In *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits*, Russell argues that the laws governing the behavious of the parts can be stated without any reference to their place in the whole. The example he offers is that of the eye, the function of which is to act as a light receptor. This can be understood perfectly well if the eye is isolated and if only the internal physico-chemical reactions, the incoming stimuli, and the outgoing nerve impulses are taken into account. In strict conformity with his mechanistic assumptions, Russell states:

> Scientific progress has been made by analysis and artificial isolation. . . . It is therefore in any case prudent to adopt the mechanist view as a working hypothesis, to be abandoned only where there is clear evidence against it. As regards biological phenomena, such evidence, so far, is entirely absent.[18]

It will be argued in due course that isolability *is* a feature of advanced systems, but Russell's statement is clearly false with regard to basic and primary biological and unicellular organisms. Moreover, the behaviour of an element is always different once isolated from the system of which it is a member. The weakness of the analytic and summative approach is that whilst analysis is indeed essential, it is

not enough. Isolating a cell, or a part of an organism, does not necessarily provide a more accurate picture. Knowledge derived from the analytic method, with its artificial separations and so on, actually presupposes a degree of understanding of the whole organism in its natural state. This understanding is logically prior to the analytic approach. Hegel is very close to this position when he says:

> The single members of the body are what they are only by and in relation to their unity. A hand, for example, when hewn from the body is, as Aristotle has observed, a hand in name only, not in fact. (Enz.I.216.Zu.)[19]

Similarly, many reflexes can be observed in an isolated spinal cord that would not be seen in the whole animal, whereas the influence of the higher centres and the brain would alter them completely. A living organism consists of a system or complex of elements in mutual interaction. From this insight, the limits of the analytic and summative conception become apparent: we cannot resolve the living organism into individual units, since each unit depends on its relationship to the whole system. This is what Hegel has in mind when, for example, he rejects the observer's attempt to separate the nervous, muscular, and reproductive systems:

> The essential nature of what is organic, since this is inherently something universal, lies altogether rather in having its moments equally universal in concrete reality, i.e. in having them as permeating processes, and not in giving a copy of the universal in an isolated thing. (PG.MM.211/B.310)

Bertalanffy draws the same conclusion when he defines the problem of life as that of organisation. As long as we single out individual phenomena, we do not discover any fundamental differences between the living and the non-living.[20]

If life is characterised in terms of 'organisation' (Bertalanffy) or 'permeating processes' (Hegel), the implications for mechanism and vitalism are final. If there is nothing over and above the various members other than the fact that they are organised, there is no room for vital entelechies. Likewise, mechanism loses its foothold once it is realised that we cannot account for the organism in terms of a summation of its individual chemical or causal relations. When organic life is investigated, one does not study isolated parts, but their totality within an organism.[21] Says Hegel:

> If we are to describe what a body *is*, the whole cycle of its alterations must be stated; for the true individuality of body does not exist in a single state, but is exhausted and displayed only in the cycle of states. (Enz.II.336.Zu.)

What Hegel is doing here is drawing attention to the conceptual

differences between speaking of the parts (or members) of a living organism and the parts of inorganic objects as conceived by traditional physics. The dissection of a living organism does not necessarily lead to the reality of that organism. This can be seen in Hegel's criticism of the chemist who

> places a piece of flesh in his retort, tortures it in many ways, and then informs us that it consists of nitrogen, carbon, hydrogen, etc. True; but these abstract matters have ceased to be flesh. (Enz.I.227.Zu.)

B. *Machine theoretical ideas*

If the problem of life is that of organisation, then what kind of organisation characterises the organic world? Classical biology conceived of organisation in terms of machine theoretical assumptions, says Bertalanffy. But unless we think of machines very differently from those which exist at present, for example, self-replenishing and self-reproducing and evolving, the principles of machine organisation are very different to the principles of organisation characteristics of the mutually interactive systems of organic life. Machines generally manifest the uninterrupted existence of the same parts; organic properties are determined by constant regeneration and the mutual interaction of the component members of a system. This latter type of organisation Bertalanffy describes as dynamic.

C. *Reaction theoretical conceptions*

These are responsible for the view of organisms as reactive machines. The analogy here is with penny-in-the-slot machines. Organic behaviour is, on these terms, conceived entirely of stimulus and response mechanisms. Such theories express a static conception of life, which shares certain similarities with the analytic and summative approach and with the machine theoretical assumption. The digestive system, it is assumed, is stimulated by food, and muscular movements are stimulated by a particular sense organ. The shortcomings of this account are obvious, once it is recognised that organisms are not passive receptors, but active participators, often capable of autonomous activity. A machine, for example, can react to a stimulus, but what is interesting is the variety of responses and alternative methods of reacting to stimuli that are possessed by even the smallest unicellular organisms. Few, if any, animals display an immediate response to a food stimulus in unfamiliar surroundings, preferring to explore the environment. Curiosity, for example, is a characteristic of most mammals. Not all organic activity is in

response to a stimulus; very often, a living organism initiates a sequence of events. The behaviour of rabbits in Skinner boxes is atypical of organic activity.

D. *The organismic conception*

Against the three assumptions of classical biology, Bertalanffy contrasts the three leading principles of what he defines as the 'organismic conception'. Analytic and summative assumptions are contrasted with the concept of 'wholeness' the machine theoretical view with the 'dynamic' conception of organisation, whilst reaction theoretical conceptions are contrasted with the concept of 'activity'. Both standpoints are therefore superseded in the 'organismic view':

> For understanding life phenomena it is neither sufficient to know the individual elements and processes nor to interpret their order by means of machine-like structures, even less to evoke an entelechy as the organising factor. It is only necessary to carry out analysis in order to know as much as possible about the individual, but it is equally necessary to know the laws of organisation that unite these parts and partial processes and are just the characteristics of vital phenomena. Herein lies the essential and original object of biology. The biological order is specific and surpasses the laws applying in the inanimate world, but we can progressively approach it with continued research. It calls for investigation at all levels: at the level of physico-chemical units, processes and systems; at the level of supra-individual units of life. At each of these levels we see new properties and new laws. Biological order is in a wide measure, of a dynamic nature. . . .[22]

In this sense, organic life is unique, and so is biology. But its 'uniqueness' does not depend upon special laws or ghostly entelechies any more than it can be reduced to descriptions of Laplacean causal laws. The biologist must recognise physico-chemical laws, but organic nature differs because the organisation of its elements is seen to be different. How different will be discussed in due course, but for the present, it must be baldly stated that to see the essential feature of life as organised systems, or as Hegel puts it, 'permeating processes', is to abandon the abstract distinction between mechanism and vitalism. The autonomy of life, denied by mechanists but external to science according to the vitalists, is in fact within the comprehension of science. It also means that, in the absence of any metaphysical laws to the contrary, should artefacts ever satisfy the organisational criterion, they too can be said to possess life.

4. THE ORGANISM AS A SYSTEM

What constitutes the organisational criterion for living organisms? In *The Logic of Hegel*, a living being is defined as

a syllogism, of which the very elements are in themselves systems and syllogisms (198, 201, 207). They are, however, active syllogisms or processes; and in the subjective unity of the living being (*Lebendige*) make only one process. (Enz.I.217)

This bears a striking resemblance to Bertalanffy's definition of life in terms of organised systems. Having argued that what matters most is the system in which the elements are organised, it is but a slight step to giving a tentative definition of the organisation of living processes. Contrasting organic nature with inorganic matter, Bertalanffy introduces his distinction between open and closed systems:

From the standpoint of *physics* the characteristic state in which we find the living organism can be defined by saying that it is not a closed system with respect to its surroundings but an *open system* which continually gives up matter to the outer world and takes in matter from it, but which maintains itself in this continuous exchange in a *steady state*, or approaches such a steady state in its variations in time.[23]

Traditional physics and chemistry were concerned with processes in closed systems. A crystal, for example, which is built up of many component parts, may persist with them for millions of years. By contrast, a living organism can be said to be in a state of perpetual flux, its components changing from one moment to the next. 'Living forms', says Bertalanffy, 'are not in being, they are happening.'[24] A process within a closed system is characterised by a state of equilibrium, but an open system, on the other hand, is said to be in a steady state (*Fleissgleichgewichte*), since it is 'maintained at a constant distance from true equilibrium by a continuous inflow and outflow, building up and breaking down of the component materials'.[25] Of course not all open systems are living systems; a candle flame, for example, is an open system which can also be seen as part of a larger system consisting of relations between the environment and the component materials of the candle. There is an intake of energy by the flame in proportion to the energy used. The flame, like a living organism, consumes as much as it requires.[26]

In a more developed expression of his concept of an 'open system', Bertalanffy defines closed systems as 'systems which are considered to be isolated from their environment'.[27] Many of the laws of traditional physics apply only to closed systems. For example: 'Thermodynamics expressly declares that its laws apply only to closed systems. In particular the second principle of thermo-dynamics states that, in a closed system, a certain quantity, called entropy, must increase to a maximum, and eventually the process comes to a stop at a state of equilibrium.'[28] But, 'every living organism is essentially an open system. It maintains itself in a continuous inflow and outflow, a building up and breaking down of components,

never being, so long as it is alive, in a state of chemical and thermodynamic equilibrium but maintained in a so called steady state which is distinct from the latter. This', concludes Bertalanffy, 'is the very essence of that phenomenon of life which is called metabolism.'[29] According to Bertalanffy, the second law of thermodynamics applies only to closed systems. In the latter, entropic increase is always positive, but open systems, living organisms in a steady state, can avoid this entropic increase by importing materials.[30]

Armed with his concept of an open system in a steady state, Bertalanffy offers a tentative definition of life:

> A living organism is a hierarchical order of open systems which remains itself in the exchange of components by virtue of its system conditions.[31]

Conversely, death would be defined in terms of a failure to maintain the mutual exchange of matter required to maintain a steady state, and the triumph of the chemical processes typical of a closed system. Hegel was not far short of this definition when he remarked that a 'living body is always on the point of passing over into the chemical process: oxygen, hydrogen, salt, are always about to appear, but are always again sublated; and only at death or in disease is the chemical process able to prevail' (Enz.II.337.Zu.). Emaciation, caused by disease, says Hegel, is likewise due to a breakdown in the exchange of components:

> The structural process is thus conditioned by the assumption of the products (of the organism). When the organism is restricted to this process, as, for example, in disease, when its interaction with the outer world is interrupted, the human being consumes himself, converts himself into an ailment. This is the cause of emaciation in disease, for the organism no longer has the power to assimilate its non-organic world but can only digest its own self. (Enz.II.356.Zu.)

The above definition of life and death cuts across the mechanist-vitalist dichotomy; mechanism cannot provide a distinction between a normal, healthy, and a dead, organism. The laws of physics are not interested in whether the cat is sick or well. On the other hand, the idea of life as an exchange of material components is not a vitalist notion. It must be conceded that within living systems, there are closed systems leading to equilibrium: for example, there is a state of 'equilibrium between haemoglobin, oxyhaemoglobin, and oxygen upon which oxygen transport by blood is based'.[32] But a living cell, and the organisation of the organism as a whole, can be described as an open system in a steady state.

There are, of course, certain limits upon self-maintaining inanimate systems meeting the above definition of life, although these

limits are not as rigid as many people have thought. For example, many inanimate systems cannot behave equifinally. In most physical systems the final state is determined by the initial conditions, whereas in animate systems the final state can be reached by different means. The characteristics of a particular species can be reached from different initial sizes, the sea-urchin can develop into full maturity from half a germ, or two fused germs, and this is what Driesch found inexplicable in physicalist terms. Growth, then, is equifinal; an open system is independent of its initial state in a way in which closed systems, subject to the second law of thermo-dynamics, are not.[33] However, there is nothing here which prohibits the creation of a mechanical system which meets all the above criteria. If someone constructed a robot which manifested the characteristics of dynamic organisation, self-maintenance, and the ability to multiply and develop itself by an intake and output of materials, we would have to look elsewhere for a criterion of whether it was alive or not. There are certain limits to definitions of life, beyond which it is a question of attitudes and social conventions. This, as I understand it, is Wittgenstein's point when he says:

> My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the *opinion* that he has a soul. (PI.II.iv)

Attitudes, however, can change, though we cannot specify what reasoning will change them. There is no criterion of life that can be given an absolute metaphysical guarantee of its permanence. Bertalanffy does, in fact, acknowledge the conventional nature of his definition of life, when, in a correspondence with Giovanni Blandino, he says that 'in no way does it attempt to describe the specific organisation of living things, and even less to reduce the latter (living organisms) to the formal criteria of the definition given'.[34]

So what is the point of defining life in terms of open systems or 'permeating processes'? To a very large extent, these definitions are destructive in the way they shatter the immediacy of existing conceptions and prepare the reader for a different direction. To grasp the 'organismic conception' is to abandon the standard of classical physics; it is to see the world in a different light—perhaps even to see a different world. From the 'organismic' standpoint, life is not inexplicable, as the vitalists held, by scientific understanding. Biology is not irreducible to physics. If recent advances in the physico-chemical explanations of life processes do not provide a satisfactory account of life processes, at least they reveal certain metaphysical difficulties for those who adhere to a strict *a priori* thesis that the sciences can never provide an adequate explanation of life. More-

over, with the concept of a 'steady state', argues Bertalanffy, the 'self-regulation of metabolism can be made understandable on the basis of physical principles',[35] thus avoiding the panzoismic position advanced by such writers as Teilhard de Chardin, who tend to reduce everything to vitalism. His point is that the static and analytic conception of matter, upon which the mechanist-vitalist dichotomy is based, is inadequate. The organic world is not dead matter plus entelechy, and the inorganic world is not static and inert. In a manner very similar to the Hegelian supersession of the antinomies of classical biology, Bertalanffy concludes:

> The ultimate motive or organismic biology, of General System theory etc., is the comprehension that conventional categories of scientific knowledge (based on sciences of inorganic world, i.e. on physics and common-sense) are not sufficient for biological, behaviouristic, psychological and social sciences. New categories must be elaborated; and modern developments are different attempts towards this end.[36]

The foregoing discussion on the inadequacies of the classical traditions of mechanism and vitalism, and of their supersession in an organismic or systems approach, has been necessary in order to draw parallels between the latter and Hegel's concept of system. To view the world as a series of dynamically interacting systems or wholes is the ultimate goal of both Hegel's system and the organismic conception discussed in this section. A more detailed examination of Hegel's concept of system will therefore be attempted in the following sections.

5. OBSERVATION AND ECOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION

> The Earth is a whole, the system of life, but as crystal; it is like a skeleton, which can be regarded as dead because its members seem still to subsist formally on their own, whilst its process falls outside it. (Hegel, Enz.II.337.Zu)

The only true and complete view of the world, according to Hegel, is to see it as an organised whole. This reflects the basic principle of the *Phenomenology*. Anything short of the whole must be one-sided or abstract. The observer's account of nature, in terms of categories which emphasise the priority of the analytic and summative approach, is inadequate. Hegel's depiction of reason's attempt to discover itself in the organic world takes the form of a parade of inadequate accounts of the nature of life.

The first problem facing the observer concerns the classification of organic life. If the organic world is to be explained, it must first be classified and described. But how does one make an initial classifica-

tion in the absence of any explanatory account? For Hegel, there is an element of circularity in the attempt to provide a foundational classification, since classification presupposes an explanatory framework. What follows is a series of answers to Hegel's request for a primary classification. The tentative suggestion that animals are primarily classified in terms of their physical adaption to the environment is swept aside by Hegel as an example of laws which 'exhibit a degree of poverty that do not do justice to the manifold variety of organic nature' (PG.MM.197/B.294). Observation's 'instinct' of a necessary relation between conditioner and conditioned rests on the assumption of an affinity between the 'formative processes' of nature and the animals who adapt to them. For example, birds are held to share an affinity with the air, fish with water, and fur-coated animals with northern climates. According to this assumption, 'the specific nature of the varieties of organic life can be determined by observations of the environment.

Now ecological classification can be helpful; for example, we can and do classify certain organic phenomena as alpine plants, swamp plants, forest insects, freshwater fish, tropical fish, and so on. But this presupposes some knowledge of what one is classifying. Ecological classification is helpful in many contexts, but no one could propose an ecological classification for the purpose of identification and nomenclature. It is generally presupposed that organisms have been identified and named beforehand. Hegel's method of bringing the observer to see that the primary classification cannot be ecological consists in challenging him to account for exceptions to the rule of identity between conditioner and conditioned. Why are some species classified as birds, even though they do not take to the air? Why are some creatures of the North without fur? And so on. As Hegel points out on another occasion, 'many beetles have webbed feet but live as well on land and also have wings for flying' (Enz.II. 270.Zu.). How much weight is to be placed upon environmental factors in these cases?

Now, Hegel is not denying that ecological classification is possible; he is simply arguing that if one insists that ecological factors constitute the primary classificatory data, one must be prepared to explain the additional criteria employed for the classification of exceptions. To do this, one must depart from the standpoint of immediacy and invoke a system of rules, or mediations, which precedes observations. In this way, the logic of observation is shown to parallel the logic of sense-certainty, where the futile attempt to isolate a 'This', or datum, of sense-certainty revealed the presupposition of a whole system of mediations. Ecological classifica-

tion cannot be immediate; one has to know what one is classifying, and in this way a whole system of identification and nomenclature is presupposed. As Hegel points out, 'there is nothing in the concept of air, the sea, or northern climates from which we can derive the concepts of birds, fish, or fur' (PG.MM.197/B.295). Laws allegedly based on such affinities have neither analytic nor synthetic justification and, because they presuppose another system of classification, cannot play a foundational role in the biological sciences.

6. OBSERVATION AND TELEOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION: THE 'TELEOLOGICAL RELATION'

A. *Classification*

Observation's second attempt to provide an objective foundation for the study of biological phenomena is in terms of the classification of life forms according to their purpose. This is generally known as 'teleological classification', and it is to the employment of teleological concepts in biology that Hegel's attention is directed. Hegel's treatment of teleology in the *Phenomenology* is brief to the point of being unintelligible, so for this reason it will be necessary to refer to material drawn from other areas of his work.

The most elementary form of teleological classification would be a utilitarian one. Many sets are defined in terms of their usefulness, or lack of it, with respect to human beings. For example, distinctions are drawn between domestic animals, meat animals, edible and non-edible plants, and herbs that can be classified according to the disease for which they are said to be remedial. Whole sciences, such as the science of horticulture, reflect the assumption that the natural world exists for the service of man. But, as in the case of ecological classification, strictly utilitarian systems require the prior classification of the organism in some other system. Not any human end will justify a classification. The observer's error therefore lies in the assumption that the classification according to ends (as with classification in terms of ecological factors) is foundational and immediate. Against this view, Hegel argues that organic purposiveness is a product of human mediations and, as such, cannot serve as a foundation for the study of organic nature, since (i) the observation of purpose presupposes considerable knowledge of nature, and (ii) if biological phenomena is seen as purposive, it is due to the conceptual framework within which the biologist operates.

B. *Mechanism and teleology*

Many biologists have argued that the distinguishing character of organic life is its purposiveness. For example, the movements of the cat can be distinguished from the fluttering of the curtain because the former are said to be purposive. The growth of a plant, from bud to blossom and to regeneration, is said to be purposive when compared with the oxidation of an iron nail. Talk of purpose, it is often held, serves to mark a conceptual distinction between animate and inanimate phenomena. Morton Beckner refers to this distinction in the following example:

> Suppose we are watching a tank in which there is a single anchovy, and that we introduce a barracuda into the tank. At first nothing happens; then, when it would be reasonable for us to suppose that the anchovy spots the barracuda, the anchovy behaves as follows: he turns sharply, swims quickly to the surface, leaps out of the water, re-enters, and repeats the sequence. The whole description (call it B) is, let us at least suppose, in non-teleological language. And is a description of exactly the same behaviour that would serve as the basis for the teleological description (call it A) 'On sighting the barracuda, the anchovy engaged in an escape reaction'. Of course B does not translate A. A in some ways says less, and in some ways says (and presupposes) much more. A says less than B since B offers details not mentioned in A. It says more since calling the anchovy's behaviour an 'escape reaction' implies that it serves the function of escape, whereas this is not implied by B.[37]

This example shows how descriptions of purposive behaviour differ from, and are irreducible to, non-purposive descriptions. From this irreducibility of teleological concepts, many philosophers have gone on to assert that teleological language is the correct and only medium for the description of biological phenomena. Mechanists have been attributed with the desire to reduce teleological explanations to causal terms, and vitalists have seized upon the irreducibility of teleological descriptions as evidence of uniqueness peculiar to living organisms. But this irreducibility merely indicates the logical disparity of the causal and teleological modes of description and does not, in itself, give any indication of which, if any, provides the best description of living phenomena. No matter how long one stares into a fish-tank, the reasons for working within, or without, a teleological framework are not determined by the phenomena observed, but by the relevant conceptual frameworks with which one approaches organic phenomena. In the absence of any strict *a priori* limitations upon scientific inquiry, the language of teleology could be substituted for some other terminology without any significant loss of meaning, just as the physical sciences have abandoned the employment of teleological concepts.[38]

Purpose, then, is not read off from the objects in the organic world.

This is Hegel's objection to the observational standpoint. Knowledge of the organic world is determined by our conceptual frameworks, and having this framework precedes observations of organic life: it is, as Hegel implies, bound up with human interests and desires. We must now consider the nature of these desires and interests.

C. *Human interests: Hegel's 'concept of teleology'*

An understanding of the relationship between human interests and the organic world brings us closer to the heart of Hegel's 'concept of teleology'. According to Hegel, all descriptions of biological phenomena are ultimately teleological, since they are rendered explicable to conceptual systems determined by human interests. To grasp this is to understand the way Hegel is prepared to push teleological concepts beyond recognition. For Hegel, human intelligence is the effective source of every teleology. But this assertion must be modified with reference to his distinction between finite (external) and infinite (internal) teleologies. In *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*, it is argued that whilst man's practical approach to nature is immediate and external, 'he correctly regards himself as an end' (Enz.II.245). Seeing nature as a means to a human end is a form of *finite* teleology, which is correct only insofar as it presupposes 'that nature does not itself contain the absolute, final end' (Enz.II.245). But he adds that a 'deeper mode of treatment than that appropriate to external and finite relationships' is required (Enz.II.245). Consider, for example, the initial motivation behind the investigation of micro-organisms. This work was largely sponsored and undertaken because it was recognised that they were ultimately one of the prime causative agents of disease. In this respect the motivation was external and finite. Nowadays, in civilised conditions, infectious disease—due to bacteria and protozoa—has ceased to be an important health hazard. Whilst an external interest in them as the agents of infectious disease has declined, there is now a growing internal interest in them as biological entities in their own right, together with a recognition that not all of them are disease-causing agents. The external interest still remains; bread-making and brewing have long utilised the activities of micro-organisms. But micro-organisms are also studied in order to throw light on more fundamental scientific and philosophical questions, such as the nature of life itself. The interest here is teleological insofar as it reflects a human end, but it is internal and infinite. Casting a glance over the history of research into micro-organisms, no one would say that the early investigations were motivated by an interest in micro-organisms as an end in

themselves; the interest in them was purely a means to some other end, namely the business of finding a cure for a specific disease for which they were held responsible. We might say that, over the years, the means has become an end in itself—the teleological relation has become internal and infinite.

Given that human interests are the final arbiter of what counts as a truth of nature, we arrive at a problem which is not solved by the observation of external and finite teleological relationships. How do we know which interests are to count as principles for the classification of the organic world? Hegel suggests that there is more to classification than the discovery of affinities between human needs and the corresponding organisms when he speaks of observing reason finding itself in the concept of purpose, 'but does not know itself in what it finds' (PG.MM.198/B.296). Whilst the classification of organic life is ultimately dependent on human interests, it is not dependent upon any finite or immediate needs. 'The notion of an end', says Hegel,

> is not merely external to Nature, as it is, for example, when I say that the wool of the sheep is there only to provide me with clothes; for this often results in trivial reflections, as in the *Xenia*, where God's wisdom is admired in that he provided cork-trees for bottle stoppers, or herbs for curing disordered stomachs, and cinnabar for cosmetics. (Enz.II.245.Zu.)

These examples show how a utilitarian emphasis upon the concept of human interest-as-an-end-to-nature can be trivialised to the point where teleology is discredited. Such classifications serve only to sever the internal link between the organism and the interest according to which it is classified. A classification based solely on utilitarian needs would be contingently related to the organism. Ultimately, this implies a doctrine of radical relativism wherein there would be no appeal to taxonomic criteria other than individual fancy. Instead of being anchored to rules and criteria, an external teleology simply floats wherever fancy takes it:

> Finding no place in the real object itself, it becomes what is called a 'teleological relation', a relation which is *external* to what is related, and consequently the very reverse of a law of its constitution. It is an idea entirely detached from the necessity of nature, a thought which leaves the necessity of nature behind it and floats above it all by itself. (PG.MM.198/B.295)

Hegel avoids the radical relativism of an external teleology, whilst still remaining within a teleological standpoint, by means of his distinction between external and internal teleologies. The former is finite, expressing a contingent means-ends relationship, such as the way in which certain animals are classified according to their wool, or the meat derived from them. But an internal teleology is infinite.

That is to say, it is complete, expressing a concept of life which avoids the postulation of external ends. Life is conceived as an end in itself, but only insofar as it corresponds to a human interest which is sufficiently free from the necessity of finite ends.

A study of the organic sphere as an end in itself would concentrate upon the kinds of relationships which exist between the various forms of living phenomena. As G.G. Simpson says after an account of various systems of classification,

> the basis of such classification should be relationships among the animals themselves, considered as entities in their own right, and not their relationships to other things, such as environment (ecological classification) or usefulness (teleological).[39]

If we equate Simpson's criticism of 'usefulness' with Hegel's criticism of external and finite teleology, and Simpson's advice to 'classify animals as entities in their own right' with Hegel's infinite and internal teleology, we find that Hegel is making the same point as Simpson when he says:

> This notion of an end was recognised by Aristotle, too, and he called this activity the *nature of a thing*; the true teleological method—and this is the highest—consists, therefore, in the method of regarding Nature as free in her own peculiar vital activity. (Enz.II.245)

This position could be seen as a repudiation of the anthropomorphic account of teleology which, according to Hegel, correctly 'presupposes that Nature does not itself contain the absolute, final end'. But this contradiction dissolves once it is acknowledged that the ability to conceive of organisms as 'entities in their own right' comes only with considerable expertise and the application of universally recognised principles. And, as in the case of the contemporary biologist who studies micro-organisms as 'entities in their own right', such an internal teleology is parasitic upon the earlier investigations inspired by external and utilitarian motives. It might be true that Linnaeus did not classify living species according to the spaces in his larder, but unless someone had drawn some crude distinctions between edible and poisonous species, there would have been no possibility of more elaborate systems of taxonomy. At the root of any teleology lies human interests. 'Nothing', says Jacques D'Hondt in a comment on Hegel's concept of teleology, 'can resist the concept. Nothing in nature can escape the rule of human *praxis* and its ends.'[40]

D. *The purpose of the concept*

Insofar as one can observe purpose in the organic world, it does not follow that there is a foundational purpose which serves as an ultimate description of organic behaviour—not even self-preservation. According to the observational standpoint, self-preservation can be immediately observed, and this, it is claimed, provides the basic distinction between animate and inanimate systems: 'What is organic shows itself when observed to be self-preserving, returning and returned into itself' (PG.MM.201/B.298). Against this statement, Hegel's argument is that it is not immediately obvious that organisms seek preservation as an end. Hegel's position is contrary to the widespread belief that individuals seek self-preservation above all else, and he therefore opposes the argument that functional language is the proper medium for the life sciences because we attribute goals, like survival, to living phenomena. The basis of Hegel's objection is quite sound: 'biological goals, if there are any, belong to the species, not to individuals'.[41] After reproduction, in many cases, the survival of the individual may be disadvantageous to the species. Moreover, from an ecological point of view, the survival of too many individuals can have an adverse effect on the balance of life as a whole. The instinctual behaviour of lemmings, male spiders, and so on, can be seen as purposive, but not necessarily in terms of self-preservation. Consider J. Lewis' remarks on the reproductive cycle of the Ammophila wasp:

> This solitary wasp digs a hole in the sand, paralyses a caterpillar, places it in the hole, lays an egg in it and covers the hole up. The egg hatches into a larva, which feeds upon the caterpillar, and ultimately turns into a wasp, and repeats the process. The wasp never knows what the purpose of this complex series of actions is and never sees the result. It is purposive, not purpose*ful* or intended.[42]

Little or no sense would be made of the activity if one were limited to the goals of the individual wasp. It only makes sense if one refers to the reproductive cycle of the species, and this implies a reference beyond the mere observed activity. Unless one brings to the observation some definite knowledge of the species concerned, one cannot infer purposiveness from the act itself. Purposive behaviour is not adequately described by reference to the immediate behaviour of the organism. Such activity, says Hegel, 'would be empty functioning without any content to it; it would not even be the functioning of a machine, for this has a purpose and its activity in consequence a definite content' (PG.MM.201/B.229). And when Hegel speaks of purpose being determined by the concept, or of 'life as a means for the concept' (Enz.II.337.Zu.), he is suggesting that it is possible to

attribute a purpose which is neither external and finite nor internal to the point of melting away into pure individual activity.

According to Hegel, the only appropriate teleological explanations in the life sciences are those which refer to the needs of the whole species, or the environment as a whole. In this respect, there are parallels between his account of teleology in the life sciences and his account of the 'cunning of reason'—an explanatory device for giving a rational account of the unintended consequences of purposive behaviour. The agents of human history, we are told, exhaust themselves in seeking their own goals whilst the 'cunning of reason' turns them into means for some other end. To use an illustration derived from *Hegel's Science of Logic*: The farmer desires a good harvest and so he desires an efficient plough. But he who desires the ends desires the means, and the manufacture of efficient ploughs requires a degree of industrialisation. The farmer who desires only a profitable harvest unwittingly contributes to the industrial revolution, which is a rational, though unintended, consequence of developments in agricultural technology, brought about by the desire for efficient machinery. This activity is purposive, but not purposeful, and Hegel's way of describing this is to speak of the realisation of the concept, as if the concept were some external directing agency. His point is simply that explanations can be given within organised systems of knowledge which go beyond particular intentions. The alternative to seeing particular activities as a means for the concept is to view history as a disconnected series of events. In the life sciences, Hegel would have been assisted by Darwinian theory, had it been available to him, since he could have resolved the dichotomy between particular goals and the ultimate finality by reference to the evolutionary process and the development of a species. As it was, Hegel was thinking on these lines when he argued that the purpose of any particular organic activity was universal, yet not external to the activity itself:

> The activity as such is nothing but the bare insubstantial form of its independent existence on its own account; and the purpose of the activity, its substance—a substance which is not simply a determinate being, but the universal—does not fall outside the activity. It is activity reverting into itself by its own nature, and is not turned back into itself by alien external agency. (PG.MM.202/B.300)

Purpose is not immediately observable. In the absence of a conceptual system there is no meaning in nature.

E. *The transcendence of mechanism and teleology*

When Hegel says 'Observation does not recognise the concept of purpose, which is not in an external intelligence but exists here in the form of a thing' (PG.MM.201/B.299), he is calling attention to the observer's assumption of an ultimate antinomy between teleology and mechanism. This antinomy is expressed in *Hegel's Science of Logic* as follows:

> Teleology is contrasted with mechanism, where the determinateness posited in the object, being external, is essentially of such a kind as manifests no self-determination. The opposition between *causae efficientes* and *causae finales*—between merely efficient and final causes—refers to this distinction; and to this, taken in a concrete form, the investigation reverts whether the absolute essence of the world must be taken as a blind natural mechanism or as an understanding which determines itself by ends. (L.II.M.436/JS.374)

Either the world is governed by blind mechanistic laws or it is governed by some vital principle. This is the antinomy which Hegel attempts to resolve. He does so, not by rejecting mechanical laws in favour of some ghostly vitalism, but by showing how teleological factors occur without the suppression of any natural laws; by showing that the teleological end of both organic and inorganic nature is human *praxis*. To make this point, Hegel refers to the way human beings, working with tools and machines, actually exploit nature whilst seeking the satisfaction of their interests and desires, yet all the time they are operating within the nexus of the laws governing the natural world. It was in his lectures of 1805–6 that Hegel introduced this theory of teleology, in which he located conscious human purpose operating within the causal nexus:

> In general, nature's own activity, the elasticity of a watch-spring, water, wind, etc., are employed to do things they would not have done if left to themselves, so that their blind action is made purposive, the opposite of itself: the rational behaviour of nature, *laws*, in its external existence. Nothing happens to *nature* itself; the *individual purposes of natural existence* become universal. Here impulse departs entirely from labour. It allows nature to act on itself, simply looks on and controls it with a light tough: *cunning*. The broadside of force is assailed by the fine point of cunning. The *point d'honneur* of cunning in its struggle with force is to seize it on its blind side so that it is directed against itself, to take a firm grip on it, to be active against it or to turn it as movement back on itself, so that it annuls itself. . . .[43]

Commenting on this passage, Lukács says:

> Like almost every major turning point in philosophy, Hegel's discovery here is extraordinarily simple: every working man knows instinctively that he can only perform those operations with the means or objects of labour that the laws or combinations of laws governing these objects will permit. That is to say, the labour process

can never go beyond the limits of causality. And every human invention must therefore consist in discovering concealed causal relationships which are then introduced into the labour process.[44]

The elements, fire, wind, and rain, are employed in the building of a house in order to keep out those very elements themselves. Nature is employed by human beings against nature. Causal laws are thus united in human *praxis* with teleological purpose. In the *Philosophy of History*, Hegel makes this point with the following example:

The building of a house is, in the first instance, a subjective aim and design. On the other hand, we have, as means, the several substances required for the work . . . iron, wood, stones. The elements are made use of in working up this material: fire to melt the iron, wind to blow the fire, water to set the wheels in motion, in order to cut the wood, etc. The result is that the wind, which has helped to build the house, is shut out by the house; so also are the violence of rains and floods, and the destructive powers of fire, so far as the house is made fire-proof. The stones and beams obey the law of gravity—press downwards—and so high walls are carried up. Thus, the elements are made use of in accordance with their nature, and yet to co-operate for a product, by which their operation is limited. (Ph.G.MM.42/S.27)

In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel refers to the same process as 'the cunning of reason', whereby 'the end puts itself into mediate relation with the object and inserts another object between itself and it', thus allowing the first object (the natural world) to 'exhaust itself externally in its place, expose it to attrition, shielding itself from mechanical violence' (L.II.MM.452–53/JS.387). Commenting on this passage, Jacques D'Hondt says: 'We are nature's pick-pockets, since we employ our knowledge of the natural world to protect ourselves from the natural world, or rather we would be pickpockets if nature herself pursued ends, if it were trying to reach them. But nature is not directed beforehand to an end, and it is for that reason that we can make her contribute.'[45]

The invention of tools and machines, the necessity of work, reveals that human beings have introduced certain ends into mechanism. Says Jacques D'Hondt:

Thanks to the machine man supersedes the relation of the tool to the activity; he puts the activity into the machine, he reverses the tools' passivity into activity, he mobilizes the forces of nature in his service: wind, water currents, the elasticity of springs. Hegel is thinking of windmills, sailing ships, clocks. With these devices man uses the forces of nature to accomplish in the material world something quite different that what would otherwise happen spontaneously. He introduces ends into a mechanism. He brings teleological activity into hitherto blind nature. He imposes on nature an almost rational behaviour. But care must be taken here; Hegel expresses it exactly: 'nothing happens to nature itself'. It continues to be itself in mechanical laws. The finality of work does not destroy mechanism and chemism. Finality is introduced into nature without affecting the mechanism of that nature. Kant said: 'All production

of material things takes place according to mechanical laws'. Doubtless! But that does not exclude, or even better, that allows that at the same time something is produced according to an intelligent finality.[46]

The end of nature is human interest. Hegel's manipulation of teleological concepts reveals the abstract nature of the mechanist-teleology antinomy. Human *praxis* introduces ends into both the inorganic and organic spheres.

F. *Conclusion*

There is no foundational purpose external to systems of human knowledge; there are no immediate or observable purposes. The observation of purpose is made within a conceptual framework, which Hegel depicts as the 'union of universality and activity'. Operating with a strict dichotomy between finality and causality, attempting to isolate the moment of purposive activity, the observer fails to comprehend the fusion of causal and teleological principles in the organic world. Hence:

> The union of universality and activity, however, is not a matter for this attitude of observation, because that unity is essentially the inner movement of what is organic, and can only be apprehended conceptually. (PG.MM.203/B.300)

Purpose, which was to provide the observer with a primary description of organic phenomena, now eludes him, and this proves fatal for the standpoint of teleological observation, since what he is looking for is a set of observations which will enable him to distinguish between various forms of life. Observational criteria cannot distinguish between animate and inanimate systems, and a classificatory system based on purpose presupposes a working knowledge of the life sciences.

CHAPTER VIII

OBSERVATION OF ORGANIC NATURE (B): INNER AS INNER AND OUTER; OUTER AS INNER AND OUTER[1]

> We presently 'see' the universe as a tremendous hierarchy, from elementary particles to atomic nuclei, to atoms, molecules, high molecular compounds, to the wealth of structures (electron- and light-microscopic) between molecules and cells . . . to cells, organisms and beyond to supra-individual organisations. (Ludwig von Bertalanffy)[2]

1. INNER AS INNER AND OUTER

A. *Introduction*

In order to maintain consistency with the analytic and summative character of the observational approach, the dialectician must refrain from speculations about purpose. Finality and causality are rigidly contrasted from within the standpoint of observation. The observer's failure to observe purpose was largely due to his conception of a world governed by static mechanical laws. As long as the method of observation is to enjoy primary in the dialectic, the object under observation must remain particular and static. The next attempt to formulate a primary classification will be strictly in terms of a quantitative assessment of morphological characteristics (this will be discussed in section 2 of this chapter). This presupposes (a) that organic systems are static entities which can be abstractly determined in isolation from one another and from their functions, and (b) that observation has a criterion for distinguishing between a particular individual and its externality—though observation has yet to provide a criterion of classification. Against these assumptions, the Hegelian position is as follows: First, organic systems, being dynamic systems in a steady state, can only be distinguished from one another by conceptual means—as opposed to the atomistic and regional approach favoured by the observational consciousness. (This forms the basis of section 1 of this chapter.) Second, there is no strict, or immediate, observational criterion for determining individuality. (This forms the basis of section 3 of this chapter.)

B. *Structure and function*

According to the static conceptions of organic phenomena held by classical biology, a living organism could be divided into a number of structures from which their corresponding functions could be inferred. This sort of inference, according to Hegel, is based on nothing better than an 'instinctual' dogmatic law that the '*outer is an expression of the inner*' (PG.MM.202/B.300). With this remark, Hegel is questioning one of the fundamental antinomies of classical biology, namely the assertion that the study of structures and functions belongs to two separate disciplines: morphology and physiology. This is what Hegel means when he says that 'each (structure and function) is a distinct being for observation, for they each seem to have a peculiar content of their own' (PG.MM.203/B.301).

The divergence of anatomy and physiology can be traced back to the time of Harvey, although it is true that anatomists have never completely divorced themselves from functional considerations. Indeed, some aspects of function, for example, the mechanics of muscle action and joint movements, have remained within the province of anatomy rather than physiology. Hegel's point, however, can be brought out in the following way. Because biology was characterised by a rigid structure-function antinomy, it was divided into two fields: morphology, or anatomy, studies the organic forms and structures, and is concerned with the description and classification of animals and plants; physiology is the study of functions and processes of living organisms, such as metabolism, behaviour, and morphogenesis. Between these two disciplines are many methodological, technical, and conceptual differences, which Hegel acknowledged. But against the assumption that these represent two different fields of interest, Hegel maintained that they share the same subject matter, 'the organic being' which 'in in undivided oneness and is a whole', and that the structure-function distinction on which they are based is 'of a purely formal character' (PG.MM.203/B.301).

If living organisms are conceived of in terms of 'open systems' (as defined in the previous chapter, section 4) or 'permeating processes', then morphology and physiology do not have different objects of interest, but are complementary ways of studying the same object. The rigid and static distinction between structure and function rests partially on what has been referred to as the 'machine theoretical conception of life' (see previous chapter, section 3.B). A machine has a fixed structure and a corresponding function: the latter being easily inferred from the former. With more complicated machines, however, this structure-function antinomy would not arise; it

should therefore be remembered that we are dealing with a crude view of a machine as well as a crude view of life. Hegel describes the assumption of a rigid structure-function antinomy in terms of an *Inner*, subdivided into an outer and an inner. The term 'Inner' refers to the abstractly isolated organism; its subdivisions of outer and inner refer to its structure and function, respectively. An outline of the classical model, depicted by Hegel, can be observed in Figure 1.

Fig. 1. Inner as outer and inner

OUTER STRUCTURE: (MORPHOLOGY)	*INNER FUNCTION: (PHYSIOLOGY)*
Nervous System	Sensibility
Muscular System	Irritability
Intestinal System	Reproduction

ORGANIC PROPERTIES

Whilst this model oversimplifies the static divisions of classical biology, the underlying analytic and summative assumption that an organism can be divided into distinguishable systems, exhibiting distinguishable structures and functions, still persists. Hegel's prime targets here are the atomistic assumptions built into regional anatomy. So in *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*, when Hegel insists 'Structure, as alive, is essentially process' (Enz.II.356), he means that life cannot be observed in dead structures or as a collection of isolable components. On the other hand, we have no need to go beyond the laws of the physical sciences for an understanding of life. Life is explicable in terms of interpenetrable physical processes. The various structures in a living body unite, says Hegel, 'to produce a general concrete interpenetration of one another so that each part (*Gebilde*) of the structure contains these systems linked together in it' (Enz.II.355). The constituent processes of an organism are activities within themselves; only when the organism is dead can we speak of the distinctive *parts*. Thus: 'In respect of its externality the

organism is a manifold, not of *parts* but of *members*, and these as such consist only in individuality. They are separable in so far as they are external and can be taken in this externality; but in so far as they are separated, they revert to the rule of the mechanical and chemical relations of ordinary objectivity' (L.II.MM.476/JS.406–7). What is important in the investigation of organic phenomena is not so much the isolated parts, but the network of relationships among them, and the principles according to which they are organised.

The observational standpoint is therefore presented in the guise of a regional atomist and, as such, must be taken seriously. In the *Phenomenology*, the observer is confronted with an isolated nervous system, a muscular system, and an intestinal system. Hegel challenges him to infer the function of these systems without bringing in knowledge not present in the observable data before him. Given this data alone, he argues that the observer cannot infer the function of the isolated organic structures. In doing so, Hegel is questioning the assumption that dissection plays a foundational role in the biological sciences. Moreover, he is questioning the prevailing wisdom of anatomists since the time of Harvey by challenging the assumption that functions are fixed irrevocably to structures in an isomorphic relationship.

It would appear that Hegel is arguing contrary to established practice, especially if we consider classical reflex theory. The doctor taps the knee; if the knee fails to jerk, the doctor infers a fault in the structure corresponding to the function of the knee. What is not as clear as the holders of the classical reflex theory think, however, is the sharpness of the distinction between these structures and the functions which allegedly correspond to them. How, for example, does this theory account for functions that are carried out after the corresponding structures have been removed? For example,

> in a prosthesis after a Saverbruch, the artificial limb attached to the stump may be stretched by muscles normally functioning as flexons, and inflected by the extensors. Experiences of this kind show that nerve centres are not fixed irrevocably and machine-like to a function.[3]

Moreover:

> The same is shown by many experiments by Bothe, von Buddenbrock, and others. For instance, in the locomotion of insects, spiders and crabs, the so-called cross-amble is characteristic. That is, in one phase the first leg of the left side, the second of the right, and the third on the left are put forward simultaneously, the opposite taking place in the following phase. This cross-amble is re-established, instantly and without a period of learning, if any number of legs is amputated. The co-ordination of the movements of the remaining legs is, of course, different from the normal. There it

cannot depend on a fixed control mechanism, but must depend on the condition present in the periphery and the central nervous system as a whole.[4]

Given that we cannot always observe a one-to-one correlation between structures and functions, how is the observer to justify his belief that the '*outer* is a manifestation of the *inner*'? Merely observing the structures, as we have seen, will not suffice, as there is no necessary relationship between the two. There can be no *a priori* inference because 'the thought of laws of this sort proves to have no truth at all' (PG.MM.205/B.304). What the observer has failed to grasp, argues Hegel, is the peculiar nature of an 'organic property' (cf. Fig. 1). The observer is under the assumption that before one can formulate the operation of a law between the structure and function of organic properties, one must first be able to identify and isolate one structure and its corresponding function. This assumption of regional anatomy, according to Hegel, suggests that the nature of 'organic properties' has been misunderstood, since the isolation of any organic system precludes the understanding of its function within a system, just as the function of a hand necessitates the co-operation of the adjoining members. This is not to say that one cannot learn anything from the dissection table, but to point out that previous to dissection, one must know something about the interpenetrability of the members.

Hegel's question has recently been raised by David Bulmer, who argues that anatomy should be studied in terms of a 'logical and integrated pattern of structure running parallel with that of function'.[5] Like Hegel, Bulmer argues against the concept of regional anatomy in favour of the study of whole bodily systems. Modern developments, argues Bulmer, favour a systematic approach. For this reason, he says, 'our teaching of microscope and electron-microscope anatomy can be very precisely related to function and here too this correlation must be on the basis of systems rather than regions'.[6] A holistic, or systematic, approach, argues Bulmer, is preferable because:

The conventional approach to the dissecting-room, with the student dissecting the body in five separate parts, is entirely regional and obviously by its nature could not be otherwise. It is very much a technique of 'cutting up', often with the student meticulously dissecting one small area without any clear appreciation of its relationship to the whole. When this approach overshadows in time all the other aspects of anatomical teaching it is not surprising that many students fail to realise the existence of any pattern—that they fail to see the wood for the trees. Anatomy becomes a disconnected mass of unrelated facts, to be regurgitated at an examination and rapidly forgotten thereafter As an additional disadvantage, good dissection inevitably displays a great amount of detail, and the presence of detail, probably because like

Everest it is there, inevitably suggests that it should be memorised. Dissection focuses attention on the trees, and distracts it from the overall pattern of the wood.[7]

From the standpoint of regional anatomy, however, the systematic, or holistic, approach presents difficulties concerning the relationship between the individual members, or regions, and the whole. For this reason, we must consider the alleged problem concerning the relationship between the whole and its parts. From the regional, or atomistic, standpoint, the holistic approach is seen to assert the primacy of the whole over its parts. What kind of a problem is this to the holistic standpoint?

C. *The whole and its parts*

The underlying theme of the *Phenomenology*—the truth is the whole—is never stronger than it is recorded in Hegel's account of biological phenomena. The function of individual members cannot be explained in terms of corresponding individual structures, and for this reason the whole is given cognitive priority. Living systems, composed of interpenetrable processes, maintains Hegel, are rendered explicable in terms of a network of relationships among the component processes. The essence of Hegel's position can be grasped from a consideration of the following example:

Clinical and experimental evidence concerning regulation in the nervous system shows that the function of its individual parts depends on the actual state of the system as a whole and on the relations with the peripheral organs (sense organs, muscles). Thus, in beetles or crabs that have lost one or several legs, the coordination within the nervous system depends on the number and arrangement of the legs still present. If organs are supplied by atypical nerves, the function of the parts and centres may change. But also the reaction of an intact animal is determined not only by the action of a definite centre alone, but also to a greater or lesser extent by the state of the nervous system as a whole. Because of this, many reflexes can be shown clearly in the decerebrated animal, not in the intact one, where they are profoundly modified by the interaction within the system as a whole. If however, the function of the parts depends on the state of the whole system, it follows that the coordination in the reaction is not, or not completely, determined by fixed arrangements, but is controlled by dynamic laws within the system as a whole.[8]

If, according to Hegel, we cannot understand a living organism without referring to the whole system in which it is a member, then in what sense is the whole greater than the sum of its parts? At this point in the dialectic, Hegel does not provide a direct answer to this question, concentrating, instead, on the difficulties incurred in the observer's attempt to isolate members and say something about them without any reference to their place in the system as a whole. An answer in keeping with the spirit of Hegel's approach, however,

is to be found in a rejection of the atomist programme depicted in the opening sections of the *Phenomenology*. Roughly stated, the answer is that a whole exhibits certain properties that are not explicable in terms of a summation of individual parts, just as an army behaves differently from a group of individuals, or a chemical compound from its base components. In the organic sphere, the primacy of the systematic whole over its component parts is best demonstrated in pathological cases.[9] When patients recover from injuries to cerebral centres, it is not the single sensations that appear first; the restoration of vision progresses gradually from an undifferentiated blurredness to the perception of certain shapes. The sense organs, on their own, do not convey any information at all, a fact which Hegel demonstrates in the chapters on sense-certainty and perception in the *Phenomenology*, thus emphasising the parallel between the genetic development of the human organism and theories of knowledge.

D. *Specialisation: Structures and functions as active processes*

Although component systems must be understood in terms of the whole, this does not render talk of component systems completely inexplicable. Biologists do speak of, and physicians prescribe treatment for, the nervous system, the muscular system, and so on. What is denied is the idea that an organism consists of a number of independent parts, each exclusively concerned with its own function. But whilst he held that the various organic properties were 'abstract determinations', Hegel was fully aware that the higher we go up the scale of organisms, the more independent their component systems appear. He even commended a theory for the classification of taxa based on various 'grades of development'. Like Bertalanffy, he held that the move towards specialisation is an essential characteristic of the higher grades of living systems:

> The higher forms of life are those in which the abstract moments of sensibility and irritability have separate existences of their own; whereas the lower forms of life possess within themselves the profounder differences, and preserve themselves in this more intense direction. Thus there are animals which are nothing more than reproductive processes– an amorphous jelly, an active slime which is reflected into self and in which sensibility and irritability are not yet separated. (Enz.II.353.Zu.)

What is important in the above quotation is the reference to the various functions as 'abstract moments' as opposed to the concrete realities which they were in the terms of classical biology. The picture of static structures can, however, be dispelled by substituting the term 'active process' for both 'structures' and 'functions'. This

would be perfectly in line with Hegel's definition of life as a system of 'permeating processes' and, for this reason, Hegel is one of the first modern writers to conceive of basing biology upon active processes. By contrasting the static concept of structure and function with that of dynamic processes, it is possible, following Bertalanffy,[10] to restate the distinction in terms of processes of long duration, which correspond to structures, and processes of short duration, which correspond to functions. When an action, such as the contraction of a muscle, is caused by a structure, it means that a short process has been superimposed on a long process. To conceive of these processes culminating in a hierarchical order is to supersede the traditional dichotomy between structures and functions. Hegel describes this view when he says:

> Structure, as alive, is essentially process, and it is, as such, *abstract process*, the *structural process within structure itself*, in which the organism converts its own members into a non-organic nature, into *means*, lives on and produces its own self. (Enz. II. 356)[11]

Moreover, if the various 'structures' are conceived of as 'active processes', we can then explain the degree of separation within the more highly developed organisms as a qualitative or conceptual distinction, rather than something quantifiable and observable only with the aid of the dissecting knife. Hegel points out that the fundamental activities of irritability, sensibility and reproduction are to be found in all living organisms: in the simplest unicellular organism as well as in the more complex living systems. In an amoeba, for example, all three activities (functions) are carried out by the same active process, namely the protoplasm of its cell. Whilst the more complex life forms distribute these 'functions' amongst different organs and systems, they are still linked to one another in the overall system. The brain is a different system to the heart, but if either stops for a few seconds, the other is incapable of acting. Similarly, the heart will not function if the liver fails to deliver the sugar, and the liver will not function if either the heart or the brain ceases to function. Specialisation is a characteristic of higher organisms, but the greater the degree of specialisation does not imply greater independence, but rather interdependence. Following Bertalanffy, we may describe this phenomenon as 'progressive mechanisation',[12] bearing in mind that complete mechanism is never attained within an organic system, since it maintains its characteristic steady state by means of an exchange of material with the environment. As Hegel argues, only in a dead organism is complete mechanism ever attained. The analogy here is with human societies, larger systems; the more complex the system, the greater the degree of specialisa-

tion and hence the need for interdependence. Should one system break down, either the other systems must perform the missing function or, if that function is essential, the whole system will perish. If the refuse disposal system ceases to function, then some other means of refuse disposal must be found if the system is to maintain a steady state.

If the analogy between organic systems and societies is to be pursued, certain qualifications must be made. Whilst it is true to say that functions normally are performed by members best suited for them in the social and the organic spheres, and that, failing that, other members may take over the function (for example, if the sinus node of the heart breaks down, the antrioventicular node assumes the function of pace-maker for the heartbeat),[13] it does not follow that the function of either organic or social processes serves towards the maintenance of the system, one reason being that it is not always possible to determine *which* system they serve a function towards. A mother's love for her son may be said to serve the function of maintaining a society by providing healthy workers. That love could easily function towards the destruction of that society if it led mothers to hide their sons from battle when the community is threatened. One might, however, conclude that the mother's love, in this case, functions in the interests of the enemy, or in the interests of social change. This, of course, would be another example of what Hegel means by the 'cunning of reason' and suggests that functionalists, such as Radcliffe-Brown, have placed too heavy a stress on maintenance and equilibrium.[14] Whilst a failure of any essential activity will impair the system, it does not follow that every activity strives for the maintenance of that system. The function of the strike committee may be to manoeuvre the government into a position where the existing social order can be destroyed. On the other hand, it can serve to maintain the existing power structure by conducting the strike in such a way as to allow workers to blow off steam, reduce their demands and solidify the authority of the Union leaders.[15] Similarly, an army of retired colonels either may function to protect society from a left-wing revolution or their efforts may actually manoeuvre the left into such a position that it has no alternative but to initiate a resolution it had not seriously intended. Functionalist explanations are illustrative insofar as they indicate how members are integrated into a system—as opposed to the analytic and summative conception. But one must not assume that functions are clear and absolute for all times. The same could be said with regard to organic systems: not every member of a system functions towards its survival.

Having made these qualifications, the analogy between social systems and organic systems can be helpful. The phenomenon of 'progressive mechanism' is common to both, even though the various functions are not irrevocably fixed. Moreover, functions can be performed by different members than those normally associated with them. And this is Hegel's point: observation of a function does not by itself determine an isomorphic correlation with a structure, and the observer is therefore challenged to specify the difference between the functions of irritability and sensibility (PG.MM.206/B. 305). There is, of course, no observable distinction. If the cat is reported to have sensed the mouse, there is no observational means of distinguishing which function occurred. If an organism is provoked to act, both the muscular and nervous systems are involved, and one can explain the behaviour of the animal 'just as much in terms of the one as the other' (PG.MM.205/B.305). Since both 'properties' are involved, what 'one man takes for high sensibility, another may just as rightly consider high irritability, and an irritability of the same degree' (PG.MM.206/B.305).

So, Hegel concludes, if we are to have a distinction between 'organic properties', it must be a qualitative or conceptual one, since the impossibility of measuring the quantitative degree of separation is apparent. For every claim that one has observed the function of irritability, someone else can claim to have observed the function of sensibility. The observer is therefore portrayed as facing two alternatives: he can either drop the distinction between sensibility and irritability altogether, or he can attempt to maintain it in a modified form. As the former course would involve an abandonment of actual scientific practices, the observer must choose the latter course. The distinction between sensibility and irritability, with modifications, amounts to the assertion that both are present in any given activity, but 'stand in inverse quantifiable relations, so that as one increases the other diminishes' (PG.MM.207/B.305). Certain types of action would now be explained in terms of an excess or deficiency of sensibility or irritability. In this way, an attempt is made to explain a conceptual, and therefore a qualitative, distinction in terms of quantifiable and observable data. This sort of reasoning Hegel attributes to those fallacious attempts to formulate laws in which qualitative opposition passes into quantity (PG.MM.207/B. 305).

E. *Quantity and quality*

In *The Logic of Hegel*, Hegel criticises the unphilosophical tendency to introduce

the wholly abstract opposition of receptivity and active capacity which are supposed to stand to each other as factors in inverse relation of magnitude. The result of this is to reduce all distinctions within the organism to the formalism of a merely quantitative difference, as a matter of increase or decrease, of intensification or attenuation; depriving them, in other words, of every possible trace of the concept. (Enz.II.359)

The cause of this aberration, adds Hegel,

lay in the fundamental error of first defining the absolute as the abstract indifference of subject and object, and then treating all determinations as only *quantitative* differences. The truth is rather that the absolute form, i.e. the concept and principle of life, has for its soul only and solely the qualitative difference which sublates itself, the dialectic of absolute opposition. (Enz.II.359)

Hegel's position is thus: distinctions between 'organic properties' are conceptual or qualitative. The claim that distinguishing between irritability and sensibility involves nothing more than an empirical and quantifiable process is, says Hegel, equivalent to the claim that we can observe the content of the tautological expression 'the size of the hole increases the more we decrease what it is filled with' (PG.MM.207/B.305). When, for example, we observe the cat pounce on the mouse, how can we distinguish between the contribution of the nervous system and the muscular system in quantifiable terms? It is therefore a matter of

indifference whether an organic phenomena is considered as irritability or as sensibility; that is so in general, and likewise when its magnitude is in question: just as it is indifferent whether we speak of a hole as an increase in the hole *qua* emptiness or as an increase of the filling removed from it. (PG.MM.207/B.306)

So what really happens when laws appertaining to sensibility and irritability are formulated? Implicit in Hegel's argument is the view that biological laws are based primarily on *a priori* considerations rather than on observational criteria. That classical biology taught that sensibility, irritability and reproduction referred to three distinct systems is something to be understood in the context of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century biology. Whether these divisions were derived from observations alone is not at all certain. The claim that the laws governing the relationship between the three organic properties derive their necessity from observation, says Hegel, 'is mere playing at law making' (PG.MM.207/B.307). Confined to the data before him, the observer is unable to accept conceptually based distinctions without abandoning the standpoint of observation.

One of the curiosities of human thought is the tendency to see distinctions, which are really conventional, as absolute and fixed. These conventions, or 'abstract determinations', are then assumed to refer to distinct realities, determined for all time. Once a conven-

tion has been employed for the distinction between sensibility and irritability, it shares the character of many other conventions; namely the assumption that its necessity is fixed and clearly demonstrable to observation. As Hegel says, it carries with it the idea 'that these differences have the significance of being present as something given' (PG.MM.209/B.307).

F. *The primacy of morphological descriptions*

Conceptually based certainty, however, does not satisfy the observer's demand for hard and fast facts. Pointing to experiments wherein the various organic properties are quantitatively isolated, he argues that the science of dissecting anatomy provides foundational certitude in the organic sphere. The present shape of observing consciousness is therefore one in which the morphological descriptions of classical anatomy are held to be foundational, and that somehow the descriptions derived from the dissecting room are more real. The following dialectic is one in which the observing consciousness is challenged to provide an adequate account of organic nature in categories appropriate to morphology. 'Tell me', says Hegel to the observer, 'how would you describe the different way a horse behaves towards oats than a dog? But do not employ any terms that are outside the realm of discourse appropriate for the descriptions of the mechanics of their respective digestive or nervous systems.'

Hegel's point is that the description of how a horse behaves differently towards oats than a dog involves a different conceptual framework than that employed in the description of the nervous and digestive systems. The kind of distinction Hegel has in mind can be seen in Winch's remarks concerning the description of a kitten writhing in pain:

> The concept of writhing belongs to a quite different framework from that of the concept of movement in terms of space-time co-ordinates; and it is the former rather than the latter which is appropriate to the conception of the cat as an animate creature. Anyone who thought that a study of the mechanics of the movement of animate creatures would throw light on the concept of animate life would be the victim of a conceptual misunderstanding.[16]

Now, Hegel would admit that the animal can be examined as a machine, but *seeing* it as a machine presupposes an ability to see it first of all as an animal. Before one can describe a dog's aversion towards oats in terms of the structure of his digestive and nervous systems, one must already know what it is like for a dog to dislike oats. A description of how an animal reacts towards certain types of food, towards other animals, or how it engages in reproduction,

involves a reference to the animal as a whole, not merely to one of its component parts. We do not capture the essence of reproductive activity in a diagram of the animal's intestines; still less do we describe its fondness for oats in terms of its muscular and digestive systems. 'The being of its totality, like its movements', says Hegel, 'cannot consist in an anatomical system' (PG.MM.210/B.309). Anatomical descriptions do not possess a degree of reality which is lacking in areas of discourse not dependent on experimental data, for

> the reality which anatomy finds cannot be taken for its real being, but only that reality as a process in which alone even the anatomical parts have a significance. (PG.MM.211/B.310)

To be sure, there is a relation between anatomical systems and short-term processes (functions), but a knowledge of this relationship depends upon descriptions of the behaviour of the organism as a whole. A particular pattern of behaviour is, for example, often regarded as symptomatic of an organic condition. Loss of appetite, tiredness, and so on, could indicate a blood deficiency; writhing on the floor and clutching the chest may indicate a heart-seizure. One learns about these organic conditions with reference to the behaviour of the organism as a whole. It is then possible to describe the behaviour in terms of a specific organic condition, since the behaviour is, in this sense, internally related to a particular structure. But we cannot, without changing many other conventions, eliminate one form of description in favour of the other any more than we can describe the actions of Winch's kitten solely in terms of spatio-temporal co-ordinates. The listless behaviour of an anaemic can be explained by reference to a corresponding condition within the structure of his blood cells, but the description of the latter is conceptually distinct from the former. When the doctor asks 'How do you feel today?', we do not reply with 'I feel a haemoglobin deficiency.'

According to Hegel, the observing consciousness fails to see the distinction between those occasions when one refers to the structural parts and those when a reference to the performance of the whole is necessary. Similar problems are encountered when the observer is challenged to assess the strength of an animal. In the absence of reference to the overall performance of the animal, the observer cannot formulate a description of its strength or weakness. All that is offered is a quantitative and sensuous description of the physical structures. This reduction of organic properties to sensuous and quantitative factors marks another transition in the dialectic

of observation. By reducing the 'inner' function to the 'ordinary form of a sense property', the principle of relation between structure and function is no longer seen as conceptual, 'but on the contrary is the category of quantity' (PG.MM.214/B.314). The following account of Organic Nature will therefore be continued in terms of the *quantification* of sensuously observed characteristics.

G. *Transition*

At the outset of this section, the examination of the observer's attempt to classify organic life in terms of an assessment of morphological characters was postponed until assumptions concerning the isolability of organic structures and functions were investigated. Having done this, we are left with an observational consciousness that has failed to recognise the conceptual nature of the distinction between various organic processes. The observer is not committed to a purely empirical and quantifiable means of classifying organic life. We thus have an observing consciousness confronted with numerous characteristics, but lacking a principle for the selection of the relevant ones for the purpose of classification. Giving expression to this principle is the problem which faces any strictly empirical system of taxonomy, and this will be pursued in the following section. However, another problem emerges at this stage: how to select those characteristics which are sufficient for the determination of an individual. Until the observer finds a criterion for determining what is to count as an individual, we can no longer maintain the assumption (held throughout the present section) that an individual organism can be examined in abstraction from externality. The phenomenologist must consequently shift his attention from the *Inner* to the *Outer* side of organic being where the relationship between inner and outer is examined in terms of organic life in its externality (PG.MM.215/B.315). Life, when seen as a collection of sensuously observed properties, must now be examined in its totality.

2. OUTER AS INNER AND OUTER

A. *Observation and classification*

What Hegel terms as the *Outer* is the totality of life; 'the embodied form and shaping (*Gestaltung*) in general, the system of life articulating itself in the element of existence' (PG.MM.215/B.315). This is to be contrasted with the concept of the *Inner*, described in the previous

section, as an organism abstracted from the whole system of life. The corresponding moments of inner and outer are to be understood as follows: The outer represents those morphological characters which are held to determine (i) an individual organism, and (ii) the various levels of taxa in the classification of organic life. On the other hand, references to the inner are to the principle according to which 'the existing members of the organic shape find their subsistence' (PG.MM.216/B.316).

Hegel is concerned here with certain empiricist assumptions to be found in various taxonomical systems. For example, when he says that 'the inner has its sense in number' (PG.MM.216/B.317), he is referring to systems of classification, according to which taxa are classified numerically. Hegel's target here is also the attempt to construct a system of taxonomy based on natural signs. Against the belief that one can, in this way, lay down an objective and real taxonomical system, Hegel says:

> The freedom of the genus with reference to its realisation is, however, something different from the freedom of specific gravity with reference to its embodied form. (PG.MM.221/B.322)

Whilst no explicit reference to Linnaeus is made, it is clearly the latter's taxonomy that Hegel has in mind, as the following remarks from *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature* reveal:

> The Linnaean classification of plants, and the successive ordering of animal species is the work of intellect or instincts; the metals are arranged according to their specific gravity. But the arrangement of the planets in space is the work of the planets themselves . . . the whole conception of a series is unphilosophical and contrary to the concept; for nature does not dispose its forms on such ladders, one after another, but in masses. The universal disjunction comes first, and then follows the further subdivision within each genus. Linnaeus' twenty-four classes of plants are no system derived from nature itself. (Enz.II.280.Zu.)

Taxonomy is conceptual rather than natural; distinguishing characters are neither transcendental nor immediately obvious. Classification in the organic world may depend upon certain distinguishing marks such as 'claws and teeth' by means of which certain species determine themselves. But nature does not have the last word; there is a greater element of conventionality in taxonomy than in some of the other sciences. Physics, for example, has stricter, and less flexible rules for the classification of the various elements. This, of course, does not mean that classifications in physics are more real, but simply that the rules of physics are drawn tighter. For this reason, argues Hegel, the criterion of classification derived from physics has no essential right to serve as the paradigm for all classification, including the organic sphere. This, of course, is not

to say that any system of classification will do in the organic sphere; there are limits to conventions. The classification of different levels of taxa are necessary insofar as that system of classification is a going concern. That there must be hierarchical systems of taxa is a practical necessity without which much of biology would be largely incomprehensible. The moment of conventionality—and its limitations—is indicated by the post-Darwinian taxonomist, G.G. Simpson:

> The use of any particular number of levels is a completely arbitrary convention. It does not correspond with anything in nature but is an artifice imposed by practical necessity in the use of any hierarchy This does not mean, however, that groups recognixed at a given level are necessarily in some sense unreal or do not correspond with naturally definable entities.[17]

That hierarchies are a necessary means of imposing order on nature is a fact about the biological sciences. Given this fact, living organisms must be seen to fit into these hierarchies. This is not imposed by the condition of the world; it is derived from the categories with which the world is approached. From this standpoint, the thesis Hegel attributes to the observer is that of empirical taxonomy; the assumption that levels of taxa are natural, non-explanatory, and immediately read off from observations of the world. Against this assumption, Hegel argues that classification precedes identification, and that we can only identify when we have some system of classification in operation. These systems are constructed according to human conventions, not on any alleged structure of the natural world. Hegel's case against empirical taxonomy has two aspects: (i) the *outer*, which examines problems arising out of the assumption that morphological features are read off from the world, and (ii) the *inner*, which examines problems arising from the assumption that taxa are determined by a numerical assessment of the organism's characters.

B. *Problems of empirical taxonomy*

i. *Outer: Observation of morphological characteristics*

To what extent do morphological characteristics determine a level of taxa? To understand Hegel's position, it should be remembered that we are dealing with pre-Darwinian systems, which do not group taxa according to theory-impregnated conceptions of phylogeny and common ancestry. Various categories, names and descriptions, were employed for the classification of collections, and were held to represent the fixed order of the natural world, just as metals

determined by their specific gravity were held to reflect the fixed order of the world. Some of the philosophical problems arising out of empirical taxonomy have remained until the present. They consist of recognising resemblances and noticing distinctions. Exactly what is to count as a resemblance, or a distinction, when one is determining different levels of taxa? If the concept is excluded (that is to say, the theoretical content of a classificatory system) and all we have are the observable properties, how do we decide which properties are relevant? This is the basis of Hegel's objection. The concept

> is excluded, which can be seen from the way the properties are found lying; they are seized upon as mere existent entities. In this state of mere existence, none have any negative characteristics in relation to the others: the one exists just as much as the other, and in no other fashion do they indicate their presence in the arrangement of the whole. (PG.MM.220/B.320–21)

The question is: Are all morphological characteristics to be given the same weighting? When one looks at the actual practice of taxonomists, it appears that very often they are guided by criteria other than morphological data, since not all variation has taxonomical meaning. Cinnamon bears, for example, are of the same species as black bears. Tomato worms, which are caterpillars of the tomato sphinx moth, may be either dark brown or green. Instead of creating new species for every morphological distinction, the taxonomist relies upon other considerations. The differences, cited above, would be simply ignored on the grounds that they were *polymorphisms*, which refers to the way some members of a species are distinguished from others by features that do not integrate. The problem for the observational standpoint would be why they should not be counted as fresh species, since the observational data is different in each case.

A similar emphasis upon conventionality is made by Simpson when he speaks of the choice between 'splitting' and 'lumping':

> The numbers of taxa are not so much a matter of generally accepted principles of taxonomy as of personal taste in the artistic canon of classification. Some classifiers, the extreme splitters, prefer the narrowest practical standards of divergence and diversity and consequently tend to recognise maximum numbers of taxa at each level. Others, the extreme lumpers, prefer the widest practicable standards and recognise minimum levels of taxa. Splitters have proposed at least 28 genera of recent cats (*Felidae*), which may be even more than one genus per species. Lumpers have placed them all in one genus, or at most two genera (*Felis* and *Acinonyx*), the latter for the markedly absent cheetah.[18]

'Splitters' and 'lumpers' have an equal claim to have derived their standpoints from observational methods, but apart from opinion and custom, there are no rigidly defined criteria. Short of a criterion

for deciding which morphological structure shall determine a category, observation must be committed to silence.

ii. *Inner: Observation and numerical assessment*

Hegel's criticism of numerical taxonomy is in many ways similar to the above remarks concerning the observation of morphological structures. Although he makes no explicit reference here, he might be pitting himself against certain metaphysical assumptions in the work of Adanson (1727–1806), a rival of Linnaeus, who is sometimes known as the founder of empirical taxonomy. As an empiricist, his stress on the evaluation of observed data justifies his being included within the observational standpoint. 'The leading principle of the Adanson school', says Simpson,

> is quite simple: observe and record as many characteristics as possible. A species consists of individuals with a maximum of shared characteristics. A genus consists of species with a maximum of shared characteristics. And so on. The necessary system of precedence of characters and ranks of taxa is thus built up step by step.[19]

The main problem of Adanson's taxonomy was bound up with its explanatory value. Simpson says:

> The very fact that it was to a great extent non-theoretical meant that it lacked an explanatory element, a meaningfulness, a judgement that can only be provided in taxonomy and in classification by some theoretical evaluation of the data.[20]

Simpson, of course, is working within the paradigm of evolutionary theory and therefore draws a contrast between the alleged 'theory-neutral' phenetic systems and phylogenetic systems which rest on theories concerning evolutionary relationships. Had he been familiar with Darwinian theory, Hegel may or may not have accepted the phylogenetic approach. This is a matter for speculation. What he would accept, however, is the phylogeneticist's thesis that the classification of data is not a theory-neutral activity. In this respect, Hegel shares an affinite with post-Darwinian taxonomists, since the latter offer a built-in theory which explains why organisms are like they are. Although Hegel's account is presented in a teleological idiom, there is not a great deal of difference between Hegel's objections to empirical taxonomy and criticisms derived from the evolutionist standpoint.[21]

The problem facing the numerical taxonomist is that of eliminating theoretical and explanatory assumptions, and remaining at the level of pure description. If this can be achieved, it is then possible, according to this line of thought, to base biology on an objective and observable foundation. So the question is: How objective and theory-neutral is numerical taxonomy?[22]

According to E. Mayr, a leading evolutionist, all systems of classification are automatically explanatory:

> It is sometimes argued that the description and its explanatory aspects of classifications should be neatly divided. This is impossible. A good classification of organisms is automatically explanatory.[23]

A more modest approach is suggested by Michael Ruse, who argues that so long as numerical taxonomists do not claim to incorporate an explanatory element into their systems, then what they are doing, though limited, is quite correct. According to Ruse, 'it would be unfair to condemn them out of hand for not doing something they do not set out to do'.[24] But if phenetic taxonomy is theory free, it then faces the problem as to what counts as a similarity. This problem is logically prior to the question of whether similarities are based on evolutionary relationships. Before counting characteristics, one is already committed to the view that it is an organism and not a stone. Counting, as Hegel argues, does not determine similarities and differences in the way that 'difference is constituted by other properties' (PG.MM.220/B.320). Before one begins to count characteristics, one must first have an idea as to what counts as a characteristic. No taxonomist simply adds anything up as a list of characteristics—as we saw in the previous section. Sharing a number is not the same thing as sharing a property. One needs to know what is being counted before one can count similarities.

The urge to eliminate the explanatory content from classification is bound up with the demand for a purely objective taxonomy. Two leading exponents of the phenetic approach have defined its intentions thus: 'the outstanding aims of numerical taxonomy are *repeatability and objectivity*'.[25] How objective is it? Imagine a numerical taxonomist confronted with an organism. Let us grant that he recognises it as an organism. How is he to discover the genus and species? Confronting him are millions of unspecified individuals; even with a computer, he can only choose certain examples as representatives of their fellows. How is one to select one of these representative samples? Only by falling back on orthodox methods of classification. Only by recognising that quantitative methods are logically dependent upon qualitative (conceptual) methods. This, I believe, is what Hegel means in the following passage:

> Thus we see that a series of bodies, whose difference is expressed as a numerical difference of their specific weights, by no means runs parallel to a series where the difference is constituted by other properties, even if, for the purpose of simplification, we select merely one or some of them. For, as a matter of fact, it could only be the *tout ensemble* of the properties which would have to constitute the other parallel aspect here. To bring this into orderly shape and to make it a connected single whole, observation

finds at hand the quantitative determinations of these various properties; on the other hand, however, their difference comes to light as qualitative. (PG.MM.220/B.320)

Hegel's criticism of numerical taxonomy is much deeper than the usual arguments concerning the difficulty of assessing millions of characteristics with, or without, a computer. To get a purely numerical system off the ground, one needs a conceptual framework which determines what is to count as a relevant characteristic. Once one relies upon other methods, the purely objective nature of a numerical system is lost.

3. THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE INDIVIDUAL TO LIFE

Hegel has examined, and found wanting, the claim that number constitutes the 'inner' principle of life. In the supersession of empirical taxonomy, Hegel is turning his back on the 'search for sure and simple signs of classes, orders, etc., of animals' (Enz.II.270, remark). According to Hegel, the whole has priority in organic systems, just as the universal has priority over the 'This' of sense-certainty. Instead of a summation of atomistic parts, says Hegel: 'We have, then, here a connected system, where one extreme is the universal life *qua* universal or genus, the other being the same life *qua* a single whole or universal individual' (PG.MM.223/B.324). Hegel's remarks here are directed against the rigid antithesis often drawn between the individual member and the system, suggesting that the distinction between individual members within a system is more conventional than one would normally think. The endless cycle of life, he says, 'is just as much a shaping (*Gestaltung*) of independent individual shapes, as it is a way of cancelling a shape assumed' (PG.MM. 142/B.224).

Given the primacy of the whole, the possibility of determining taxonomical systems in numerical terms and common properties, and so on, is ruled out. According to Hegel: 'Observation can only meet with reason in the sense of life in general, which, however, in its differentiating process involves really no rational sequence and organisation, and is not an immediately grounded system of shapes and forms' (PG.MM.224/B.326). Life, as a system, reveals no immediate distinctions; observation cannot provide the foundations of biology in terms of isolable and quantifiable 'bits' of the natural world.

There is, however, another question that Hegel raises in these remarks. It concerns the status of an individual and its relation to the whole. What is an individual and, moreover, what counts as a

whole? Where do we draw the line between the individual and the whole? Certain obvious conventions determine what counts as an individual when we refer to lions and tigers, for they distinguish themselves by their 'claws and teeth':

> a correct insight has hit upon taking the distinguishing characteristics of the species also from the *teeth*, claws and the like, i.e. from the animal's weapons; for it is through these that the animal itself establishes and preserves itself as an independent existence, that is, distinguishes itself from others. (Enz.II.370, remark)

The moment of conventionality asserts itself when we consider different ways of considering groups. Imagine a society which sees a wolf-pack as an individual system, instead of a collection of wolves. This is not so incredible, since the system we refer to as an individual wolf functions better when it interacts with other 'wolf-systems'. It is even more difficult to determine individuality in anthills and beehives: could we not see soldier ants, drones, workers, and so on, as functional members of the whole system in the way that the heart, liver, and respiratory systems can be seen as 'permeating processes' within the human individual? In fact, Eugene Marais once wrote that the 'soul or mind of the white ant lay not in the individual ant but in the colony as a whole. The individual ant was a "cell", while the colony was the organism; and it was the colony that had to adapt to the exigences of natural selection.'[26] On these terms, we could explain the greater independence of the component systems in terms of 'progressive mechanisation', which typifies the more complex organisations.

According to the dictionary, an individual is something that is indivisible, but unicellular organisms actually reproduce by division. Is a tubular worm an individual when it can be cut into several pieces, each one capable of growing into a complete organism? Experiments with freshwater polyps throw doubt on the immediacy of an individual. By making an incision at the anterior end of the polyp, one can produce a double-headed water polyp.[27] Yet should it ever capture a water-flea, both heads will fight over the spoils—even though whichever head takes it, it still goes into the same digestive system. Are we speaking of one or two individuals? Or does it make sense to speak of individuals at all in this context? The point is that there are no absolute and foundational criteria for individuality. Just as colonies of ants or hives of bees can be seen as whole systems composed of mutually interacting member systems subject to 'progressive mechanism', we could extend this way of thinking to describe a whole lake or forest community, embracing both organic and inorganic spheres. In this way, the systems which togeth-

er constitute the whole of life can be seen to form greater and greater hierarchies, until we arrive at the highest unit: 'the universal individual Earth...as a concrete living whole' (PG.MM.224/B.325).

From these remarks, it is clear that Hegel's position is more radical than many of the twentieth-century systems theorists. His reference to the Earth itself as a 'concrete living whole' suggests an extension of his concept far beyond that of the more modest twentieth-century systems theorists, which must not be dismissed as an expression of poetic licence: it is an essential outcome of Hegel's drive towards completed knowledge.

Such an extension of Hegel's organismic conception does find expression, however, in the Gaia hypothesis[28] that the Earth's living matter, air, oceans, and land form a part of one huge living system, which could be seen as a single organism. As an organism, it is capable of defining the conditions needed for its survival and makes sure they stay there. 'Life', argue Lovelock and Epton, the expounders of this hypothesis, 'must have found a way of keeping the temperature of the Earth's surface within the critical range of 15–30°C for hundreds of millions of years in spite of drastic changes of atmospheric composition and a large increase in the mean solar flux.'[29] A failure to maintain this temperature range could have led to glaciation, or conversely, an overproduction of ammonia could have led to a surface temperature where life is impossible.

Moreover, the Earth as an open system in a steady state, falling short of equilibrium, can be said to violate the laws of chemical thermo-dynamics: 'If chemical thermo-dynamics alone mattered, almost all the oxygen and most of the nitrogen in the atmosphere ought to have ended up in the sea combined as nitrate ion. The air we breathe cannot be a very fortunate once-off emanation from the rocks; it can only be an artefact maintained in a steady state far from chemical equilibrium by biological processes.'[30] And, as a living system, Gaia must be capable of resorting to various strategies in order to maintain itself in a steady state. For example, the control of the Earth's temperature is not limited to the stimulus-response mechanism of a thermostat control, characteristic of cybernetic systems. One means of heat control, before the amount of oxygen in the air increased, must have been 'the emission and absorption of ammonia by simple organisms'.[31] But, say Lovelock and Epton:

> There must have been other ways as well, for the failure of only one year's crop of ammonia would have led to a self-accelerating temperature decline and extinction of life. One can envisage advantage being taken of the ability of certain algae to change colour from light to dark, thereby influencing the emissivity and the albedo of the surface. Later, when photosynthesising and respiratory organisms existed and oxygen

became a major constituent of the air, the control of the concentration of carbon-dioxide, which is also a heat resorbing and retaining gas, may have been used to play a role in stabilising temperature.[32]

Gaia, as the authors insist, is only a hypothesis, but it could provide us with a credible explanation of important features about the world, such as the dramatic temperature decreases in northern regions and other significant climatic changes and factors relevant to climatic regulation. Moreover, it can help, as the authors indicate, to bring about a reconciliation between man and his environment—a move away from the nineteenth-century concept of human existence as a struggle against nature—which bears more than a superficial resemblance to the programme for reconciliation hinted at in the *Phenomenology*. It seems that if Hegel's concept of the world as a living whole is to have more than a poetic meaning, it could well be along the lines indicated by the Gaia hypothesis.

There are very important parallels with Hegel's concept of the Earth as a living system and the guiding thought of the *Phenomenology* where the process of human history and cultural development is examined in terms of a 'system of shapes assumed by consciousness, as an orderly self-constituted whole of the life of spirit' (PG.MM.225/B.326). The difference is that organic nature, being a means to human ends—the concept—has no history of its own, 'simply dropping from its universal, life as a process', to which science attributes determinations according to human requirements (PG.MM.225/B.326).[33]

4. SOCIETY AND THE CONCEPT OF SYSTEM

That organic nature has no history implies certain restrictions on the analogy often drawn between human society and living organisms. Nevertheless, the concept of society as a living whole has enjoyed a certain notoriety unintended by Hegel. Certain functionalist thinkers (for example, Herbert Spencer, Comte, Radcliffe-Brown, and Talcott Parsons) have portrayed society in terms of the organic model in which each member contributes to the smooth functioning of the whole. This is not Hegel's position: a fact which emerges from even the briefest acquaintance with his remarks concerning the 'cunning of reason'. Numerous criticisms have been levelled at the systematic approach. One such criticism is that it is totalitarian, allowing for no change, and treating the individual members as nothing more than dispensable parts, like bees in a beehive or like cells in a living organism. This is one of the dangers

with the organic analogy and, no doubt, many functionalists have employed systematic concepts in this manner. But such analogies are only misleading because, like any other philosophical analogy, we allow them to mislead us. When it is said that an analogy exists between human society and an organism, this does not mean that it should apply in every respect. As well as similarities between phenomena, there are also many dissimilarities. The movements of the tides, planets, and little apples are analogous to one another insofar as they behave in accordance with the law of gravity and other natural laws, but this is probably as far as their similarity goes.

Another criticism of the analogy between organic systems and human societies is that the static view of society, implicit at least in the Radcliffe-Brown and Talcott Parsons functionalist approach, affords no adequate model for the understanding of social change, for if the system is functional any change will disrupt it. Social change, on these models, is underplayed and explained as a deviant phenomenon. There is, however, a fundamental difference between the systematic or organismic conception, and the homeostatic conceptions of society employed by the functionalists. The systematic view entails a complete revision of the homeostasis principle and its exclusive emphasis upon the tendency towards equilibrium. Neither an organic system nor a social system displays tendency towards equilibrium. If the analogy has meaning, it is not with respect to shared tendency towards homeostasis. Organic systems and social systems are dynamic in character; both are capable of processes which can change the direction of the whole in ways that appear to the present structure as destructive to the whole. If we are to make any sense of the Hegelian dialectic, it must be seen in terms of such a development, both within the shapes of consciousness in the *Phenomenology* and the course of human history reflected by them.

There is, however, a popular confusion between open systems, characterised by a steady state, and cybernetic systems. The conflation of these distinct categories has led to the misguided belief that human societies, insofar as they can be interpreted as open systems, are in some way reducible to the cybernetic concepts of feedback and self-adjustment. Whilst there is no metaphysical law which says they are not reducible in this way, it would make sense to reduce human societies to cybernetic principles if either (a) cybernetic principles were drastically revised, or (b) human societies changed sufficiently for explanations of them to be sufficiently explicated in cybernetic concepts. This not being the case, cybernetic systems need to be distinguished from open systems; and this characterises

Hegel's account of living organisms and societies. The minimum elements of a cybernetic model consist of a receptor which accepts 'stimuli' from the outside. This stimuli is fed externally to a 'centre' which reacts to the 'message', and in turn transmits this 'message' to an 'effector', which eventually reacts to the initial 'stimulus' with a 'response' in the form of an 'output'. In turn, this 'output' is monitored back, by a 'feedback loop', to the receptor, which 'senses' the preliminary response and directs the subsequent action of the system so that the desired result is obtained. The most popular example of a cybernetic model is the thermostat, where the thermometer is the 'receptor', and the output in the form of the heat obtained is fed back to the receptor, which then regulates the supply of fuel. Cybernetic principles are thus characterised by feedback, homeostasis, and maintenance at a constant level. The analogy with the thermostat and bodily temperature systems in warm-blooded animals is quite effective, and the result has been the incursion into biology and sociology cybernetic principles and an attempt to understand both in terms of block and flow diagrams.[34]

This analogy can be misleading for several reasons. First, a feedback system is only one amongst many other self-regulating systems. Our ability to observe them in living organisms should not obscure us to their limitations. Second, they are 'outer-directed' and limited to stimulus-response activities due to the structural arrangements of their parts; they are designed for a limited purpose. Third, cybernetic feedback, it is true, expresses circular causality as opposed to linear causality (where A causes B), but open systems exhibit a form of dynamic interaction among many variables. Cybernetic systems are neither dynamic nor self-organising, and their relationship with the environment is characteristic of closed systems, since they are open only to information in the form of stimulation from the outside. Lacking the characteristics of dynamic interaction, they are incapable of growth, development and differentiation.[35] Organic and social activity does not aim at the homeostasis characteristic of the efficiently run thermostat maintaining room temperature in optimal conditions. The organic whole, as we have argued, is characterised as a system in a steady state, in a mutual exchange relationship with its members, but never attaining equilibrium. Functionalists have generally been wedded to the stimulus-response concept of mechanism, and have seen this in the organic world. What they have been unaware of is the fact that only dead, or dying, organisms or cultures attain the homeostasis characteristic of a stimulus-response mechanism.[36] It might appear natural in a mechanised society to see men as functional machine components,

but should such theories be taken seriously and human beings actually behave as stimulus-response mechanisms completely incapable of autonomous action, then the society which reflects these theories would cease to function.

5. CONCLUSION: SYNOPSIS OF THE REMAINING SECTIONS OF *Reason* AND THE TRANSITION TO *Spirit*

Throughout the examination of Organic Nature, Hegel sought to undermine the mechanist conception of life and to avoid the vitalist alternative. Mechanism was influential in an age which saw the achievements in the mastery of nature in terms of human discovery of an objective realm of law. Its antithesis, vitalism, derived its strength and support from that which remained inexplicable to the mechanist standpoint. The transcendence of mechanism and vitalism involved a rejection of analytic and quantifiable methods in favour of a systematic, or organismic, approach; the assertion of dynamic conceptions of life and matter, and the rejection of static concepts of organic life. In contrast, life was portrayed as an ascending system of active processes, culminating in the idea of the Earth as one organic system.

The primacy of the whole over its component parts is the guiding concept in Hegel's treatment of classical biology. The same trend can be discerned in the dialectic of observational psychology, examined in the following subdivision of chapter VI of the *Phenonenology*. It is, however, unnecessary to retrace these steps in great detail. The pattern, established in the section on sense-certainty and developed in the dialectic of observation, is repeated. The search for an objective or transcendental standpoint of certitude in the sciences is combated at each level with the assertion of the primacy of the concept. Atomistic and piecemeal attempts to locate the foundations of science are combated with concepts of wholeness and system. In the sphere of observational psychology, Hegel's approach consists of the breakdown of the atomistic approach, with its assumptions of immediacy, and its replacement by systematic conceptions of wholeness and totality in which human behaviour can only be rendered explicable in terms of mutual interaction. The dialectic of physiogomy and phrenology recaptures the inner-outer antinomy, and Hegel accordingly asks how the character (inner) can be inferred from observations of the bones and skull (outer). The absurdity of phrenology exhausts the category of 'reason's observation'. *Reason* must now give way to a higher category. This

category is *Spirit*. But first some remarks should be made concerning the programme of observational psychology.

Observational psychology has its parallel with classical association psychology, which attempted to resolve mental phenomena into particular elementary units, such as sensations. Hegel's treatment of observational psychology therefore consists of the confrontation of the analytic and summative approach with the concept of the primacy of the whole, and in so doing anticipates *gestalt* psychology —which shows the existence and primacy of wholes that are not a summation of elementary units. The central aspect of observational psychology is its psychologism, against which Hegel posits the reality of the individual as a being essentially within the collective of mankind. The tension between the universal moral law and Kantian psychologism, which comes to its climax in the section entitled 'Reason as Lawgiver', provides Hegel with an insoluble antinomy between the individual and the universal, which proves fatal for the category of 'Reason'. If reason is a faculty possessed by an individual self-consciousness, how impartial, asks Hegel, is 'Reason as Lawgiver?' Here we must consider Kant's universal maxim 'Everyone should tell the truth.' But what is the truth? Should we qualify the above maxim, whilst still remaining within the assumptions governing reason's individuality, it becomes 'Everyone should tell the truth according to his knowledge of it.' In this way, the moral law fails to attain the objectivity to which it lays claim. The objectivity of morality, claims Hegel, is not to be found in an individual consciousness. Against the Kantian 'fallacy' of assuming the unity of individuality and universality in a single consciousness, Hegel directs the inquiry away from the individual to the ethos of a community.

The study of the individual as a system within the greater whole is undertaken within the category of *Spirit*. From the standpoint of *Spirit*, it is accepted that the principle of individuation lies within the collective of mankind. Foundations, which formerly were sought in the individual and his experience, are now sought within historic communities. Instead of shapes of consciousness, we now have 'world shapes' which, says Hegel, 'are distinguished from the preceding ones in that they are authentic spiritual forms, actual world shapes, rather than shapes of consciousness' (PG.MM.326/B. 460). In *Spirit*, existence belongs to a people, and the search for foundational certitude is pursued across the plains of culture and human history; from the Greece of Antigone to the Europe of the enlightenment, the French Revolution, and its aftermath in the Europe of Napoleon. At the level of *Spirit*, the philosophical assump-

tions of a culture are to be found in art, morality, and religion. It is therefore fitting that Hegel postpones any explicit reference to philosophy until he has exhausted the implicit philosophical assumptions of art, morality, and religion. In the following chapter, we shall rejoin Hegel's dialectic at the point where the nature of philosophy is about to be elucidated.

PART SIX

THE SYSTEM OF PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER IX

REVEALED RELIGION AND ABSOLUTE KNOWLEDGE

1. INTRODUCTION

Many commentators have misunderstood Hegel's account of absolute knowledge at the end of the *Phenomenology* in the same way as they have wrongly interpreted his 'absolute spirit' as a source of cosmic rationality. According to Charles Taylor: 'Hegel claims to be able to demonstrate the existence of a cosmic spirit who posits the world according to rational necessity'.[1] And, in one of the most sympathetic works on Hegel to have emerged within the Marxist tradition, Georg Lukács credits Hegel for his insight into the nature of human activity and *praxis*, but then interprets 'absolute spirit' as an external agency. Says Lukács, 'Hegel lost his way in the miasmus of idealism where a mystified demiurge carried on its activities. . . .'[2] This is not a far step from a traditional theistic interpretation of Hegel where, at the end of the *Phenomenology* when absolute spirit is identified with God, the account of spirit as an external guiding force is cited as evidence of Hegel's theistic idealism which was later rejected by Marx. Thus William Leon McBride, in *The Philosophy of Marx*, says that at the end of the *Phenomenology*, 'it becomes clear that absolute spirit is to be identified with God—a somewhat unorthodox divinity, to be sure, immanent in the world, which has caused itself to evolve by means of the actual minds of individuals and the "spirits" (this metaphor of ordinary language is to be taken literally in Hegel) of various epochs of civilization. Marx utterly rejected from the beginning . . . this conception of a spiritual agency, finding no evidence for it, and considerable evidence that material forces of various sorts shape the world as we know it.'[3] The analysis of Hegel's conception of religion and absolute knowledge, presented in this chapter, attempts a rejection of the 'spiritualist' interpretation and consequently re-opens the question concerning the extent to which Marxists can claim that Marx brought Hegel's dialectic from the spiritual to the realm of concrete human activity. Marx may have demystified what passed for Hegelianism amongst his contemporaries, but a

re-interpretation of Hegel's texts suggests a very different Hegel to the one Marx overturned.

2. REVEALED RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERSTANDING

> Feeling, anticipation, knowledge of God, are thus only in man; without such, the divine mind would not be in and for itself universal. (Hegel, GP.I.MM.96/HS.75)

There is a strong tradition which maintains that in Hegel religion and philosophy are virtually identical. This view finds expression in the contributions to the Wofford symposium of 1970, of which the following remark from W.H. Werkmeister is typical:

> I submit that Hegel's basic orientation, his whole mode of thinking, is essentially religious. At its very core, his philosophy is religion coming to understand itself.[4]

This is a misunderstanding of Hegel's overall intention which, in the *Phenomenology*, is to describe, without presuppositions, the various shapes of consciousness as they appear to the philosopher-historian. A great deal of confusion has been generated out of Hegel's claim that God 'is as real as spirit' (PG.MM.554/B.761). Hegel simply means that God is as He is to be found in human activity. To understand the reality of God, we (and by 'we', Hegel refers to philosophers and readers of the *Phenomenology*) must understand the role which the concept of 'God' plays in a religious community. For Hegel, the philosophical content of religious experience is to be found in what the Wittgensteinian philosophers of religion would describe as the grammar of a religious community.[5] On these terms, reports of what believers see or hear, although important factors in religious inquiry, cannot provide an adequate philosophical understanding of Divine truth. Just as the inquiry into the foundations of language and knowledge cannot begin with the atoms of speech or sense-certainty, so, in the chapter on Revealed Religion in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel rules out all inquiry into religious knowledge which begins with unmediated immediacy. Parallels can be drawn between the opening arguments of the *Phenomenology* and the penultimate section. Whilst the immediacy of sense—the Here, Now, and This—cannot be indicated without presupposing a wider system of mediations, so the immediacy of religious revelation presupposes a 'grammar' or system of mediations within which talk of religious revelation—the alleged foundation of religious experience—has any meaning. 'The absolute substance', says Hegel, 'is not intuitively apprehended, but conceptually comprehended'

(PG.MM.556–57/B.764). To understand what believers mean when they talk about religious revelation is to understand the role in which such experience plays in their thoughts and activities. The analysis of revelation is neither of a sensuous nor a subjective experience. Revelation is to be understood as an act of imagination bound up with public practices, which Hegel describes as 'the reality of the religious communion' (PG.MM.557/B.764). It is only by engaging in religious practices, rituals and the appropriate way of life that one attains the imagination necessary for the experience of religious revelation. Conversely, a cricicism of religious practices directed only at a failure to verify the revelation upon which they allegedly stand would be beside the point. Revelation may be put forward as the foundation of a religious mode of discourse but, once established, the system of social relationships within a religious community guarantees its survival long after the revelatory foundations have been criticised and rejected. This point can be brought out with reference to a report concerning the revealed texts upon which the Mormon religion is said to stand. *The Sunday Observer*, 12 March 1978, reported on

> allegations that the Book of Mormon, the rock on which the faith is built, was actually a hoax. Four scholarly researchers, working independently, have decided that part of it was pilfered from an unpublished novel written in 1816. If this should be proved the foundations will be in question. Mormons are taught that the Book was miraculously translated from an unknown language inscribed upon golden plates. The whereabouts of these lost scriptures was revealed to founder Joseph Smith in 1830, by an angel.

The article continues:

> 'Forgery or not', one objector told me, 'it makes no difference to the fact that non-Mormons here live as second-class citizens. The pecking-order is first the Saints, far behind them the WASPS (white protestants), then Catholics, browns (Mexicans-Americans) and finally Blacks.'

Hegel would welcome this point. The reality of the Mormon faith is grounded in the social order; the social order provides the foundations. Once established, criticism of the foundational revelation is of secondary importance.

For Hegel, then, a philosophical grasp of religious revelation involves a wider frame of reference than the verification of revelatory foundations. But this has not always been the case in philosophy. Many philosophers to this day see themselves to be concerned with the business of establishing proofs or refutations of the foundations —revelatory or otherwise—of religious knowledge. From this standpoint, religion and philosophy are seen to have the same

content; the knowledge and understanding of God. Now, Hegel often says that the content of both religion and philosophy is God, absolute substance, or absolute spirit; but this does not mean that his philosophy of religion is inseparable from religious knowledge, as another Wofford contributor, John E. Smith, thinks. For example: Hegel's 'repeatedly stated view of the relation between religion and philosophy, makes it impossible for us to think of eliminating the religious element in his thought while supposedly leaving his philosophy still standing'.[6] The truth is that in his early and in his mature works, Hegel is deeply concerned to distinguish between religion and philosophy. In his *Early Theological Writings*, he makes this explicit with reference to the authoritative relationship between master and disciple in religion, and between the master and student in philosophy. Thus, in the following extract we see Christ, in whom Hegel sees the seeds of positivity or authoritarianism, unfavourably contrasted with Socrates:

> Of course, one did not hear him deliver sermons on a platform or a mount: How could it even have occurred to Socrates, in Greece, to deliver sermons? He aimed to enlighten (!) men. . . . The number of his closer friends was indeterminate: the thirteenth, fourteenth, and the rest were as welcome as the preceding ones. . . . Socrates did not live in them and was not the head from which they, as the members, received the juice of life. He had no mould into which he wishes to pour his characters and no rule according to which he might have desired to even out their differences. . . . He had no mind to polish for himself a small corps that might be his bodyguard, with the same uniform, drill, passwords—a corps that would have one spirit and bear his name forever. . . . Each one of his students was himself a master: many founded schools of their own; several were great generals, statesmen, heroes of all kinds . . . not heroes in martyrdom and suffering, but in action and in life. Besides, whoever was a fisherman, remained a fisherman; nobody was to leave his home; with each he started with his handicraft and thus led him from the hand to the spirit. . . . He did not offend anyone by swaggering self-importance or by using high-flown and mysterious phrases of the sort that impress only the ignorant and credulous.[7]

Although the mature Hegel was less vitriolic in his treatment of Christianity, he was, nevertheless, anxious to elevate the status of philosophical knowledge above that of religious knowledge. In the *Phenomenology*, and even more so in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel goes to great lengths to distinguish between religion and philosophy. Religion, with its formal similarity to, and communicative dependence upon, artistic imagery provides an unsatisfactory medium for the ever-questioning philosopher. From within the standpoint of religion, its truths are perfectly adequate. Only within philosophy is every assumption questioned; other branches of knowledge, as Wittgenstein argues in *On Certainty*, depend on the fact that our eyes are firmly closed to the possibility

of doubting the propositions which serve as their cognitive framework. According to Wittgenstein, religion, ethics, aesthetics, and philosophy lay outside the limits of language. The truths of religion were to be shown, not said. But for Hegel, whilst philosophy is of a different order than the sciences, it nevertheless enjoys a superior position to religion and art. If a religion shows its truth, philosophy argues for its conclusions. For this reason, Hegel concludes that a philosophical understanding of religious discourse is superior to a believer's understanding. 'God is attainable', says Hegel, 'in pure philosophical knowledge alone and only *is* in that knowledge itself, for He is spirit' (PG.MM.554/B.761). Religion might provide certainty of Divine truth, but it lacks the necessity of a philosophical inquiry into the nature of this certainty. Whilst the believer is concerned with the knowledge of God, the philosopher is concerned with the question 'What is involved in having a knowledge of God?' The presentation of religious truth-claims are in the form of what Hegel describes as 'picture-thoughts' (*Vorstellungen*), a sub-scientific and therefore inadequate medium for philosophical discourse, being primarily the medium for the presentation of parables and allegories. As Hegel says, religious language 'has the content without its necessity' (PG.MM.560/B.767). One either accepts or rejects a parable; there are no necessary stages in its presentation.

For Hegel, philosophy is the most perfect science; it expresses a unity of method and content; it is thought acting upon thought, always subject to criticism, further clarification, analysis, and rigour. With religion and art, however, one can never be sure that the content has been adequately expressed. Like philosophy, the religious and artistic presentations can always be disagreed with, but, unlike philosophy, the latter have no means of obtaining conviction other than the presentation. Another way of putting this is to say that in philosophy, one is concerned with internal relations, whilst art and religion are characterised by external relations. And whilst religious thought claims to touch an important 'depth', this very depth lacks a necessity, since its meaning is not necessarily rendered comprehensible with the presentation of the religious object. In the absence of rigorous proofs, the pictorial proofs of religious expression can always be *seen* to manifest a shallowness of thought. Here is what Hegel says in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*:

> Just as the Freemasons have symbols which are esteemed for their depth of wisdom—depth as a well is deep when no one can see the bottom—that which is hidden very easily seems to men deep, or as if depth were concealed beneath. But when it is hidden, it may possibly prove to be the case that there is nothing behind. This is so in free-

masonary, in which everything is concealed to those outside and also to many people within, and where nothing remarkable is possessed in learning or in science. Thought is, on the contrary, simply its manifestations; clearness is its nature and itself. The act of manifestation is not a condition which may or may not be, so that thought may remain as thought when it is not manifested, but its manifestation is itself its being. (GP.I.MM.110/HS.89)

The 'truth' of the Christian deity is presented in pictorial form, as a 'picture' of the natural relations of father and son (PG.MM.560/B. 767). This is Hegel's way of drawing attention to the fact that religious discourse relies upon metaphors rather than objects. God is presented as an old man who lives a long way off, with his son, just as an aunt who lives in Australia—only further. Once his son did make the journey, but was not well-received. So now he stays with his father, keeping a watchful eye on us. This was once a popular image of God in the eyes of many practising Christians, and critics of religion likewise held that a refutation of such views could be derived from information provided by the empirical sciences. Lukács, for example, complains that 'dogmatic Marxism has not yet got beyond ideas about religion that date from the forties of the nineteenth century. One used to read articles to the effect that rockets that were sent up into space found no sign of God there, and there were atheists who imagined that an argument like this would work on anyone, as if there was even a washerwoman today who still believed in heaven in the sense of Thomas Aquinas or even Dante's *Divine Comedy*.'[8] Nowadays, the attack on literal pietism comes from a variety of sources and is by no means as controversial as the criticism of the literal interpretation of the Gospels advanced by the young Hegelians in the mid-nineteenth century. The contemporary rejection of literal pietism by Dr. J.A.T. Robinson, author of the no-longer controversial *Honest to God*, has been amplified by the Wittgensteinian philosophers of religion who have concentrated upon the meaning and significance of religious discourse in the believer's mode of life, rather than on any literal meaning of the terms employed in religious practices. This position can be illustrated with reference to Wittgenstein's 'grammatical analysis'. The surface-grammars of 'my son is in the room' and 'my son is with God in heaven' are similar, but their depth-grammars are different. The latter is discovered by exploring the limits of what can be said and what cannot be said in each case. The result of this analysis suggests that in religious discourse, one does not refer to God as a possible being amongst beings, but that the meaning of 'my son is with God in heaven' is to be found in the way of life of those who employ this mode of discourse.

Now it is not clear whether the post-Hegelian standpoint is still within the framework of religious discourse, and this has given rise to questions concerning whether or not those who reject literal pietism can be said to remain within a religious ontology. What can we think of God if we do not conceive of Him as a super-person above the world? If pictorial theism is mistaken, what is left of religion? A denial of the literal account of the crucifixion and resurrection, for example, holding that what is meant is purely symbolic of the ability for the Christian message to survive, suggests a change in the meaning of the faith which is incompatible with the old ontology. A non-literal account of religious discourse can be embraced by theists and atheists alike. Lukács speaks of the break-down of the old religious ontology, 'broken down in the sense that ... there are neither Catholics nor Protestants today who would take the Old and New Testaments as the historical and ontological foundation of their behaviour'.[9] It is clear that Hegel, too, rejected foundational claims of literal pietism, and his writings on the subject reveal many similarities with the Wittgensteinian philosophers of religion. Like the Wittgensteinians, Hegel is anxious to combat the view that religious revelation brings in knowledge from the outside, that it provides external foundations of knowledge and truth. The following remarks by Bosanquet on Hegel's account of revealed religion could well have been written by someone schooled in post-Wittgensteinian philosophy of religion:

> 'Revelation is the only true knowledge and ground of religion', says Hegel, 'because *revelation consists in the realisation of God in man's intelligent nature*.' We are, however, not unaccustomed to such phrases, and our imagination is equal to its habitual task of evading their meaning. We take them to be a strong metaphor, meaning that God, who is a sort of ghostly being a long way off, is, notwithstanding, more or less within the knowledge of our minds, and so is 'in' them, as a book which is actually in London may be in my memory when I am in Scotland. Now, right or wrong, this is not what Hegel means. He means what he says; that God is spirit or mind, and exists in the medium of mind, *which is as actual as intelligence, for us at any rate, only in the human self-consciousness*. The thought is hard from its very simplicity, and we struggle, as always, to avoid grasping it. We imagine spirits made of some sort of thin matter, and so as existing just like bodies, although we call them disembodied. And then we think of this disembodied form as an alternative to human form, and suppose spirit to have somehow a purer existence apart from human body. This error really springs from imagining the two as existences of the same kind, and so conflicting, and from not realising the notion of spirit as mind or self-consciousness, which is the only way of conceiving its actual presence in the world.[10]

It is important, however, to understand where Hegel differs from mysticism, popular Christian thought, and the Christian interpretation of his philosophy. He would not accept that the sensuous

metaphors employed in religious, or artistic, representation are mere symbols of a higher inexpressible 'beyond', known only by analogy with the sensuous. This form of 'vulgar mysticism' is unsatisfactory to the philosophical mind.[11] Symbolic representation of an alleged inexpressible truth provides only an evanescent satisfaction to the consciousness seeking a philosophical understanding of God:

> It obtains satisfaction by attaching, in an external way, to its pure negativity the positive significance of the unity of itself with absolute being. Its satisfaction therefore remains hampered with the opposition of an (external) beyond. (PG.MM.574/B.784)

According to Hegel, the philosopher is not satisfied with the symbol of something remote. The content of religious knowledge, insofar as religion is a human activity, is found in human form, not in any inexpressible dimension. A philosophical knowledge of God, we might say, is the recognition that the meaning of a religious symbol is the role given in human *praxis*.[12] Says Bosanquet:

> The notion of a spiritual body other than and incompatible with the natural body does not arise. Spirit exists in the medium of consciousness, not in any peculiar kind of matter. The spiritualisation of the natural body is not to be looked for in an astral or angel body, but in the gait and gesture, the significance and dignity, that make the body of the civilised man the outward image of his soul, and distinguish him from the savage as from the animal. The human soul becomes actual itself, and visible to others, only by moulding the body into its symbol and instrument. It ought to have been an axiom of psychology, Hegel says, that the series of animated forms must necessarily lead up to that of man. For this is the only sensuous form in which mind could attain adequate manifestation. Thus anthropomorphism in fine art is no accident, nor an unworthy portrayal of Divinity. If the Deity is to be symbolised to sense, it must be in the image of man. The symbol is not, indeed, the reality, as the sensuous image is not conscious thought; but this is a defect inherent in artistic presentation, and not attributable to anthropomorphism in particular.[13]

There is nothing beyond the religious, or artistic, presentation. It speaks for itself. The 'Adoration of the Magi', Verdi's *Requiem*, etc., are complete and 'infinite' expressions of their religious content, requiring no external explanation.[14] There is no 'other' spiritual realm; everything is open to view—either you see it or you do not.[15]

3. THE ABSOLUTE

> The philosopher is a man who must cure himself of many sicknesses of the understanding before he can arrive at the notion of the sound human understanding. (Wittgenstein, RFM.IV 53)

The final embodiment of spirit, says Hegel, is absolute knowledge,

philosophy, or systematic science. With the standpoints presented in the *Phenomenology*, we were invited to understand the relationship between the subject and its object from the point of view peculiar to each standpoint. Throughout the *Phenomenology*, consciousness

> had to take up a relation to the object in all its aspects and phases, and grasp its meaning from the point of view of each of them. (PG.MM.575/B.790)

What, then, is the content of absolute knowledge? Hegel's answer is disappointing to those who expect some superior standard of knowledge, since he states that 'this content is nothing else than the very process just spoken of' (PG.MM.583/B.798), and this process is a highly condensed synopsis of the entire *Phenomenology*. Commenting on his presentation of the shapes of consciousness, he says:

> What we have done here is simply gather together the particular moments, each of which in principle exhibits the life of spirit in its entirety. (PG.MM.582/B.797)

From this, it follows that the absolute is to be found in a presentation of the shapes of consciousness and not in any superior dimension of thought. In fact, the absolute truth was present all the time. So when Hegel says that 'nothing is consciously known which does not fall within experience' (PG.MM.585/B.800), he is rejecting any appeal to a transcendental or other-worldly standard of absolute knowledge. The presentation of the entire range of the shapes of consciousness, wherein the experiencing subject is constantly transcending its own external standpoint, is nothing more than Hegel's attempt to humanise philosophical knowledge.

We might describe the movement of the *Phenomenology* as a detailed returning to the fact that experience is ultimately dependent on the subject: the subject, of course, is not the Cartesian-Kantian subject, but spirit (*Geist*) itself, whose development and constitution has been followed throughout to the point where it becomes the entire range of human knowledge. Throughout history, we find that the substance-creating subject is not a particular ego, or individual, but the totality of human knowledge and culture. History is described as a 'self-mediating process' wherein we find 'a tardy procession and succession of spiritual shapes and forms, a gallery of pictures, each of which is endowed with the entire wealth of spirit' (PG.MM.590/B.807). The outcome of the kind of presentation attempted in the *Phenomenology* is absolute knowledge, where spirit recognises itself as spirit:

> The goal, which is absolute knowledge or spirit knowing itself as spirit, finds its pathway in the recollection of spiritual forms (*Geister*) as they are in themselves and as they accomplish the organisation of their spiritual kingdom. (PG.MM.591/B.808)

The last section of the *Phenomenology*, entitled *Absolute Knowledge* can be summarised as follows: (i) that absolute knowledge is philosophical truth; (ii) that the philosophical truth has been presented in each 'shape' of consciousness; (iii) that philosophical truth, or absolute knowledge, is attainable, since it is mind-dependent, and has been expressed in each presented shape of consciousness; and (iv) that answers to philosophical problems can be derived from a description of the various shapes of consciousness. Philosophy is descriptive: its questions are to be answered by a study of the various systems of knowledge, not in the assumption of some transcendental principle or favoured paradigm of cognition. This can be seen as a new approach to philosophy, which Hegel, in a more optimistic mood, conceived of as the first part of *Systematic Science*. It can also be seen as the end of philosophy, insofar as philosophy is seen as the search for ultra-scientific truths and principles concerning the nature of reality.

CHAPTER X

HEGEL AND WITTGENSTEIN ON THE MEDIUM AND METHOD OF PHILOSOPHY

1. THE MEDIUM

> Philosophy only states what everyone admits (Wittgenstein, PI.599)
>
> Philosophy is the activity of transforming what exists in representational form into conceptual form. (Hegel, Enz.I.20)

In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel argues that the medium of philosophy is to be found in the activity of 'cultivated thought' (L.I.MM.220/JS. 41), the concept, expressed from a given standpoint in history. The term 'concept', or '*Begriff*', comes from '*begreifen*', which means 'to comprehend', but it also has sensuous roots: '*greifen*' means 'to grab' or 'to grasp'. Hence '*Begriff*' has a basic meaning implying a thorough grasp, with connotations of *bringing something together*. '*Begriff*' is a precise term which should not be confused with '*Vorstellung*' (often translated as 'notion'), which suggests something vague and sub-scientific, a term Hegel often employs to characterise the medium of art and religion. Insofar as philosophy demands a greater degree of precision, we should not confuse *Begriff* with *Vorstellung* and, for this reason, be wary of translations of '*Begriff*' as 'notion'.

So what is meant by saying that the medium in which philosophy is expressed takes the form of the concept? In the Translator's Introduction to the *Phenomenology*, Baillie describes the concept as the

> ultimate principle controlling and penetrating all thought wherever it appears, whether in sensation, perception or abstract reflection. (PG.B.21)

And in the Preface, Hegel says:

> Truth can only attain shape by becoming scientific—or, what amounts to the same thing, the truth finds the element of its existence only in the concept. (PG.MM.14–15/ B.71)

Talk of the concept as a medium in which the truth is expressed can be understood by reference to Wittgenstein's remarks in the

Investigations. Like Hegel, Wittgenstein held that philosophical clarity could be achieved by a rearrangement of what is known, rather than the alleged discovery of a hidden realm of truth, and consequently rejects the assumption of a hidden depth, or foundations, beneath the surface of language. Hence:

> The problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known. (PI.109)

Philosophical knowledge is achieved by bringing together that which at first sight may seem disconnected. One of the reasons why confusions in language occur is that language, or rather the way in which language is used, often conceals the various connections between concepts:

> A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not *command a clear view* of the use of our words.—Our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity. A perspicuous representation produces just that understanding which consists in 'seeing connexions'. Hence the importance of finding and inventing *intermediate cases*. The concept of perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the form of account we give, the way we look at things. (Is this a '*Weltanschauung*'?) (PI.122)

This 'bringing together' or 'seeing connexions' is an adequate account of what Hegel means by the 'conceptual form'. Concepts, for Hegel, form an organic whole, and this talk of 'the concept' implies a 'system of reason'. The central idea here is of 'conceptual space', an idea familiar to readers of Wittgenstein. It is bound up with the rejection of the critical approach to problems of knowledge. A critique, as intended by Kant, and by Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus*, instructs by drawing limits to human knowledge, whilst a descriptive method reveals information by drawing connexions. The emphasis of Hegel, and Wittgenstein in his later writings, is on relationships within systems rather than on atomistic ingredients. Consider how the expressions 'slab', 'beam', and 'block', in the language game of the *Investigations*' Builders, and Hegel's 'here', 'now', and 'this', are meaningful only in terms of a whole system of discourse. In this respect, both Hegel's and Wittgenstein's idea of conceptual space can be understood in terms of organic systems, as opposed to objective foundations. Timothy Binkley, in a study of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, suggests that:

> The *Investigations* approaches something like an organic network while the *Tractatus* claims it (language–DL) is an abstract logical tree.[1]

Binkley also refers to 'conceptual space' in his account of Wittgenstein's descriptive method in philosophy:

A philosophical description removes the spell which hindered our perception of a certain region of conceptual space. The nature of the description will be closely associated with the nature of space; and conceptual space, like artistic space, is fundamentally of the imagination. It is the imagination which finds the limits of our concepts because these limits are determined by the scope and structure of what we can imagine [2]

Whilst there is a great deal in common between Hegel's and Wittgenstein's ideas of conceptual space, there is also a parting of the ways between their respective modes of philosophical expression. Whilst Hegel adopted a scientific medium, Wittgenstein adopted an artistic one. In a number of important respects, his work resembles that of an artist. His examples are never drawn from history or the sciences; what is known as Wittgenstein's 'anthropological method', for example, involves the use of artistic rather than scientific imagination. Anthropologists do not preface their work with 'Let us imagine a tribe who . . . '; they observe and describe real tribes. Their employment of imagination is bound up with what they have read, with the various theories they have been taught, their field work and so on. Whilst Wittgenstein's descriptions were often fictitious and imaginative—even his 'natural history' was fictitious—Hegel's descriptions were those of the sciences of his day, or at least relevant to the epoch in philosophy he was portraying. (This is why his doctrines have often been dismissed as obscure whilst the actual obscurity belonged to the doctrines he was describing rather than in his own work.)

Hegel had a very good reason for the employment of a scientific medium. It is bound up with his resolve to describe the phenomenon of knowledge as it appears. It is also bound up with his view that artistic imagery and religious *Vorstellungen* are inferior media for the expression of the absolute. In the sciences there are accepted procedures for the determination of knowledge, but in art and religion what Hegel describes as an 'inner necessity' is lacking. The presentation of a work of art, or religion, involves the acceptance of a picture but, from the standpoint of the philosopher, there is no reason why someone must accept this picture as the truth. This is not to ignore established traditions and criteria for the assessment of artistic and religious expressions, but to draw attention to an element of arbitrariness about art and religion which is not found in philosophy: one cannot argue with artistic or religious presentations; one either accepts or rejects the picture, which is why the works of the later Tolstoy and much of the religious obscuranticism of Kierkegaard and his latter-day followers may be profound whilst lacking in philosophical significance.

To the extent that Wittgenstein's medium is artistic, we can either accept or reject many of his imaginative examples. This is why so many of them appear unsatisfactory and one is left wanting to know more about those strange tribes whose limited existence is determined solely by his imaginative powers. Whilst Hegel described philosophical and scientific standpoints, Wittgenstein presented pictures. The *Tractatus* was one huge picture which was later replaced by many. One simply grasped them. Their success in freeing philosophers from their confusions is partly due to Wittgenstein's genius and skill in presenting them. This is reflected not only in his published works, but also in the personal power he held over his disciples who, over the years, have turned him into a philosophical cult figure analogous to James Dean in the 1950s. Wittgenstein's aversion towards science and preference for artistic imagery and oracular pronouncements has left a somewhat harmful legacy, probably unintended. It finds its concrete expression in the view that philosophy need not be concerned with anything beyond the finite range of ethical examples derived from literary sources, and is generally confined to the 'cloistered classroom'.[3] For Wittgenstein, the artistic medium was unproblematic, largely because of his assumptions concerning the nature of language. Aesthetics, ethics, religion and philosophy all fell outside the limits of language and for this reason it was unnecessary, and indeed difficult on these terms, to draw distinctions between them. Binkley, who argues very forcibly that Wittgenstein's medium is artistic, points out that 'Wittgenstein's own language games can be seen as myths', that is to say, 'therapeutic myths'.[4] However, it must be stressed that whilst he used an artistic medium, Wittgenstein's writings must not be construed as 'works of art'; his imaginative presentations are simply intended to reveal logical possibilities. This is why he felt no constraint on his use of language when attempting to free philosophers from their confusions and used whatever tool came to hand. And this is why he employed imaginary tribes, absurd metaphors: God giving a parrot understanding, the time on the sun, and anything else that came into his mind.

There is, however, an excuse for those who conflate Wittgenstein's philosophy into support for a particular artistic, religious, or ethical standpoint; since Wittgenstein left no room for a distinction between philosophy, morality and religion, they all fell equally outside of language. On the other hand, there is no excuse for those who claim that Hegel's philosophy is an expression of a Christian religious and ethical standpoint. For Hegel, rightly or wrongly, had a method of classifying each expression of knowledge in terms of the relation between the subject and object within each discipline. Artistic

imagery and religious *Vorstellungen*, for Hegel, were sub-scientific forms of thought; philosophy alone was distinguished by the unity of its subject and object.

This raises the whole question of the use of myths and metaphors in philosophy. According to Hegel, the mythical medium could never be the primary form of philosophical argument:

> If philosophers used myths, it was usually the case that they had the thoughts and then sought for the images appropriate to them; Plato had many beautiful myths of this kind. Others have likewise spoken in myths, as for example, Jacobi, whose philosophy took the form of the Christian religion, through which he gave utterance to matters of a highly speculative nature. But this form is not suitable to philosophy. (GP.I.MM. 108/HS.87)

It should be clear from the above passage and from a reading of Hegel's remarks on the relationship between religion and philosophy in the Introduction to the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* that Hegel is not reducing philosophy to the Christian religion. Of even greater importance is his thesis that philosophical argument cannot advance solely through examples and myths, since their employment in philosophy are only useful as teaching aids. The analogy here is with the teaching of arithmetic. That children are taught to count by reference to objects in the world is necessary, but whether they count apples, fingers or toes is unimportant. Likewise, Plato's myths are only employed in the introduction to the subject matter. 'When he comes to the matter in point,' says Hegel, 'Plato expresses himself otherwise, as we see in the *Parmenides*, where simple thought determinations are used without imagery' (GP.I.MM.109/HS.88). The myth in philosophy, argues Hegel, is an optional extra employed 'in order to present the matter in an easier form' (GP.I.MM.109/HS.88).

In philosophy, unlike art and religion, the myth or example is not employed to initiate action, but to clarify the argument. In order to convey one's point, it is not essential to use a particular kind of example. A point can be made in moral philosophy by citing the Devil or the scriptures, whichever suits the purpose. (Indeed, Wittgenstein was fully aware of the dangers of a 'one-sided' diet of examples. See PI.593.) The prevailing cult of examples and counter-examples, in Anglo-Saxon philosophy, has done much to counter the reification of thought, but it is important to distinguish this from the tendency to advance an argument solely by means of myths or examples drawn from literary, fictional or Biblical sources, lest one, like Jacobi, unwittingly slips in certain speculative or moral presuppositions which tend to add bias to one's purely descriptive intentions.

So, crucial to Hegel's account of conceptual space, the bringing together of concepts, is the employment of non-fictional resources. For this reason, the Hegelian approach depends upon knowledge mediated through organised disciplines. The truth, which finds its 'element of existence only in the concept' (PG.MM.15/B.71), must be in the form of an organised system. It must be scientific.[5] If the truth which philosophers seek is found in the medium employed by the various scientific disciplines, then the content of absolute truth does not reside in some superior realm of being, as many of Hegel's contemporaries, appealing to mysticism and religious symbolism, held. The philosophical medium must be distinguished from attempts to provide other-worldly knowledge: its insights reflect neither a mystical nor a quasi-religious approach. Whereas religious and mystical knowledge is usually associated with the attainment of a superior spiritual state, 'Philosophy must beware of wishing to be edifying' (PG.MM.17/B.74).[6] It does not provide access to any superior standpoint awaiting the appropriate psychological, moral or linguistic capacity to take hold of it. Contrasting his 'conceptual-systematic' approach with the 'empty depth' of the quasi-religious utterances of his contemporaries,[7] Hegel says:

> The strength of spirit is only as great as its expressing its depth is only as deep as it dares to spread and lose itself in explication. (PG.MM.18/B.74)

Hegel is no mystic; there is no absolute over and above the organised systems of knowledge in which truth is expressed.[8] Combating the popular Romantic account of inspiration, Hegel argues that genius, great vision, and absolute knowledge are not so much a product of personal inspiration as the representatives of a whole system of knowledge. Philosophical knowledge is acquired in human activity, not in religious or mystical passivity. 'Wisdom', he says, 'is not acquired in sleep: only dreams are conceived in sleep' (PG.MM.18/B.75). Mystical insight, for Hegel, is parasitic upon other systems of knowledge and, for this reason, cannot provide the foundations of philosophical certitude.

On the other hand, the philosopher must avoid the temptation to restrict philosophical expression to the medium employed within a particular favoured discipline. This kind of reductionism Hegel describes as abstract, one-sided, or partial, which is true insofar as it reflects one aspect of reality, but inadequate when held up as a universal principle. Hegel's point is expressed in the following metaphor:

> A building is not finished when its foundation is laid; and not just as little is the attainment of a general concept of a whole the whole itself. When we want to see an oak with

all its great vigour or trunk, its spreading branches and mass of foliage, we are not satisfied to be shown an acorn instead. Thus science, the crown of a world of spirit, is not found complete in its initial stages. The beginning of a new spirit is the outcome of a widespread revolution in manifold forms of spiritual culture; it is the reward which follows a chequered and devious course of development, and after much struggle and effort. (PG.MM.19/B.75–76)

Hegel's point is that reductionism falls between two aspects of science: the initial and the developed. The initial, or partial, represents knowledge from an arrested standpoint in the history of spirit; the developed, or complete, from the standpoint of completed knowledge. It is from the partiality of initial accounts of reality that reductionism derives its impetus. The picture here is of a man confronted with a huge and complex machine. He cannot hope to explain every moving part, but why should he? If he can determine the essential principles governing the machine, he will be able to understand the whole process and, what is more, apply this principle to other machines of the same kind. But then he wants to go further and apply his principle to other disciplines; he wants to say that his principle has a universal validity, and this is when he starts to force concepts into watertight compartments. In a very important sense, this analogy depicts the paradoxical nature of philosophy itself. A principle, often derived from a science, in the hands of a philosopher can both illuminate and distort reality. We might say that the history of philosophy reflects such a movement from illumination to distortion.

The tendency to distort reality by reducing it to the standards of one favoured discipline reveals what Wittgenstein calls a 'craving for generality' or 'contempt for the particular'. One of its sources is

Our preoccupation with the methods of science. I mean the method of reducing the explanation of natural phenomena to the smallest possible number of primitive natural laws; and in mathematics, of unifying the treatment of different topics by using a generalisation. (BB.18)

Wittgenstein's anti-reductionism is essentially Hegelian, except that Hegel sees the root of the 'craving' in the tension between initial and developed knowledge, with the implication that developed or completed knowledge is within human attainment. Hegel's claim to have reached such dizzy heights of comprehension may be dismissed as an exaggeration, but the possibility of the completion of knowledge is seen by Hegel as the means by which philosophical problems can be resolved. Although Wittgenstein shared Hegel's belief that philosophical problems would disappear with developments in human knowledge, he never spoke of completed knowledge,

holding that the solution to philosophical perplexity lay in the removal of the problem—in turning away from philosophy. But on Hegel's terms, it can be maintained that this attitude towards philosophical puzzlement is but another philosophical standpoint which may or may not be rejected in the future. The only solution to philosophical puzzlement, according to Hegel, would entail a 'respect for the particular'; a complete grasp of each science from within. Otherwise, claims to philosophical certitude will always be the possession of a few who have mastered an esoteric terminology, without any content. Hegel draws this interesting conclusion from his comments on the inadequacy of partial knowledge and its resulting 'craving for generality':

> Without this last feature (the developed expression of the form and content of a system of knowledge), science has no general intelligibility (*Verstandlichkeit*) and has the appearance of being the esoteric possession of a few individuals—an esoteric possession, because in the first instance it is only the essential principle of science, only its inner nature that is to be found, and the possession of a few individuals, because, at its first appearance, its content is not elaborated and expanded in detail, and thus its existence is turned into something particular. (PG.MM.19–20/B.76)

In the above quotation, Hegel is highlighting a tendency closely associated with the craving for generality; namely that once one has found the principle, or secret, philosophy becomes a jealously guarded domain of a few initiates who share its esoteric terminology. One is reminded here of a Pythagorean community; a Platonic elite corps of philosopher-kings; Leninist vanguard parties; esoteric schools of philosophy and the social sciences, and the peculiar jargon, mannerisms and habits shared by Wittgenstein's immediate disciples. Against all of this, Hegel, often regarded as the most esoteric of all, argues that philosophy should be made intelligible to all:

> Intelligibility is the form in which science (i.e. philosophy–DL) is offered to everyone, and it is the open road made plain for all. (PG.MM.20/B.76–77)[9]

Philosophy, thus conceived, cannot be an independent language game, like the other sciences, complete with its own specialist terminology. The dimension of philosophy is to be found in the medium relative to each language game or system of 'cultivated thought'. For this reason, Hegel would reject the assumption behind Russell's remark that:

> Everybody admits that physics and chemistry and medicine each require a language which is not that of ordinary life. I fail to see why philosophy alone should be forbidden to make a similar approach towards precision and accuracy.[10]

To hive philosophy off from other branches of knowledge would be to destroy philosophy. Since it is essentially bound up with other branches of knowledge, its problems are an important aspect of them. Hegel was fond of likening systems of knowledge to spheres. Philosophy, too, was a sphere, but he also saw it as a sphere which permeated all other spheres of knowledge.

According to Hegel, the medium of philosophy, the concept, is not bound up with a particular exalted standpoint. Philosophy has no specialist terminology: conceptual thinking does not belong exclusively to the province of literature, aesthetics, religion, or any individual science. Nor is the medium for the expression of the concept the means of providing access to some mystical or quasi-religious standpoint. It is certainly not a medium of thought exclusively possessed by a few specialists who claim to have uncovered the general laws governing reality and have developed a specialist vocabulary for the expression of their insights. Such aspirations are derived largely from a 'craving for generality'; the attempt to abstract general laws from initial, rather than completed, knowledge. This view under criticism reveals a commitment to an atomistic theory of knowledge according to which an overall world-view would consist of a summation of partial items of knowledge linked together with inferred principles. But human knowledge is not of this nature and, for this reason, Hegel argues that philosophy does not have to be the study of the general principles of reality conducted in a medium appropriate for them. The medium of philosophy is the language in which philosophical problems have their origin: it is the language of 'cultivated thought', or organised knowledge, of human activity and work. Solutions to philosophical problems are likewise to be expressed in this medium with the completion of human knowledge.

2. THE METHOD

> But it should be added that one powerful feature which commends his thought is the incisiveness of what he called the philosophers of the Understanding, the analytic thinkers of his day. Many of the strictures brought about by modern philosophers against the philosophic practice of working with hard and fast distinctions and sharp antithesis were already anticipated by Hegel. So if Wittgenstein on games is not quite Hegel on the concrete universal, there is at any rate a family resemblance between the two. (W.H. Walsh)[11]

Hegel's method of philosophy can be characterised by saying that the method and content of philosophy are one and the same. As

such, it stands against what he describes as formalism, the separation of method from content. Formalism finds expression in the atomist programme and sees the ultimate goal of human knowledge in terms of an encyclopaedia in which the totality of human knowledge is categorised and defined. As such, it either stands in opposition to, or fails to comprehend the nature of, the holistic or systems approach favoured by Hegel. The atomist programme, as Hegel shows in the chapters concerning sense-certainty and organic nature, depends on the assumption that one can abstract the general principle from a summation of instances of a phenomenon. Formalism is thus generated by the search for the general principle. It is assumed that once one has the formal structure, the particular content can be inferred from it. In this respect, the formal structure plays a foundational role.

Against formalism, Hegel and Wittgenstein would agree that many confusions within philosophy involve the attempt to separate form from content, foundation from edifice. Commenting on a 'formalist' attempt to determine the structure of language, Wittgenstein says:

> For they see in essence, not something that lies open to view and that becomes surveyable by a rearrangement, but something that lies *beneath* the surface. Something that lies within, which we seen when we look *into* the thing, and which an analyst digs out. '*The essence is hidden from us*': this is the form our problem now assumes. We ask: '*What is* language?' '*What is* a proposition?' And the answer to these question is to be given once and for all; and independently of any future experience. (PI.92)

Central to Wittgenstein's later writings is the attempt to show that there is no form or essence which can be detached from particular instances of thinking, remembering, expecting, reading, playing games, and so on. To Hegel, the logic of formalism is similar to the foundational approach which he rejected in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*, for just as the foundations cannot be examined without certain presuppositions about the edifice, neither can the form be isolated from the content. The separation of form and content, at best, presents no more than what is already known, yielding only a 'monochrome formalism, which arrives at distinctions in the matter it has to deal with only because this is already prepared and well known' (PG.MM.21/B.78), and, at worst, imposes a set of rigid formulae between reality and the mind, limiting one's account of experience to what Hegel calls the 'pigeon-holing process of the understanding' (PG.MM.52/B.111). This metaphor is very apt. It compares the formalist philosopher with the bureaucrat, whose indices and filing systems act as a barrier between himself and the world:

What results from the use of this method of sticking on to everything in heaven and earth, to every kind of shape and form, natural and spiritual, the pair of determinations from the general schema, and filing everything in this manner is no less than an 'account as clear as noon-day' of the organized whole of the universe.[12] It is, that is to say a synoptic index, like a skeleton with tickets stuck all over it, or like the rows of boxes kept shut and labelled in a grocer's store; and it is as intelligible as either the one or the other. It has lost hold of the living nature of concrete fact; just as in the former case we have merely dry bones with the flesh and blood all gone, in the latter there is shut away in those boxes something equally lifeless. (PG.MM.50–51/B.110)

The tendency towards formalism recurs throughout the history of philosophy.[13] Philosophers are wont to push dichotomies and distinctions, which no doubt illuminate certain problems, to the point where they distort reality. The urge to parcel out language and thought into neat categories and distinctions, to determine the laws of thought, principles of philosophy, limits to human knowledge, methodology, and so on, until philosophy becomes dogmatic and ripe for a transition to another shape of consciousness, is a hazard of which those who seek philosophical clarity must always be aware. The history of philosophy reflects the constant movement from illumination (the employment of a distinction) to distortion (forcing reality into this distinction) and to the transcendence of this distortion in a recognition of the fluidity of mind's categories. This is the course of the dialectic described in the *Phenomenology*.

Combating formalism, Hegel's approach, like Wittgenstein's, involves 'respect for the particular', but the particular must be seen as part of a system, as a member of an interrelated whole.[14] Hegel's phenomenological approach rejects both formalist and foundationalist approaches, since both drive a wedge between method and content. Instead:

True scientific knowledge demands abandonment to the very life of the object, or, which means the same thing, claims to have before it the inner necessity controlling the object, and to express this only. (PG.MM.52/B.112)

The impetus that leads a philosopher from point to point, drawing together the various members of a systematic whole, should not follow any formalistic scheme, but should develop out of the subject itself. This, in fact, is the essence of what might be called the 'Hegelian Dialectic'; the very opposite of the 'thesis-antithesis-synthesis' schematic programme which has been attributed to him. The Hegelian approach demands that one is 'sunk into the material at hand, and following the course that such material takes, true knowledge returns back into itself' (PG.MM.52/B.112).

CHAPTER XI

THE PHILOSOPHICAL PROPOSITION

> When we do philosophy we are like savages, primitive people, who hear the expressions of civilised men, put a false interpretation on them, and draw the queerest conclusions from it. (Wittgenstein, PI.194)

1. HEGEL, WITTGENSTEIN, AND ORDINARY LANGUAGE

In spite of the obscure style of Hegel's Preface to the *Phenomenology of Mind*, one of its salient points is that the answers to philosophical questions are not to be found in the postulation of a realm of transcendental certainties known only by specialists equipped with an external method and esoteric terminology. If so, then how are they to be answered? It is important, says Hegel, that philosophy is not seen as a meta-science exhibiting a method or medium external to ordinary determinations of knowledge. Instead: 'The beginning of philosophy presupposes or demands from consciousness that it should feel at home in this element' (PG.MM.29/B.86). Insofar as philosophy requires an intellectual effort, 'the individual has the right to demand that science (philosophy) shall hold the ladder to help him get at least as far as this position' (PG.MM.29/B.86).[1] The onus is on the philosopher to make himself intelligible by the standards of ordinary language and the sciences. If it is not rendered intelligible, the individual will find it as difficult and unnatural as 'walking on one's head' and probably as harmful (PG.MM.30/B.87).

But if philosophy must be conducted in the medium of ordinary language and the sciences, where does this leave philosophy? For Wittgenstein, philosophy has a parasitic relationship with ordinary language and cannot advance beyond it. The *end* of philosophy is tied to the return to the standards of ordinary language. Like Wittgenstein, Hegel concedes that philosophy cannot advance beyond established systems of knowledge. For example, Wittgenstein's assertion, 'Philosophy only states what everyone admits' (PI.599), echoes Hegel, when the latter says that

> the business of philosophy is only to bring into explicit consciousness what the world in all ages has believed about thought Philosophy therefore advances nothing new: and our present discussion has led to the conclusion which agrees with the natural belief of mankind (Enz.I 122)

But whilst the return to 'ordinary linguistic practices' marked the *end*[2] of philosophical puzzlement for Wittgenstein, Hegel saw it as the beginning of *Systematic Science*, the truly genuine speculative philosophy. This distinction, however, is more apparent than real, since it amounts to nothing more than the fact that both are operating with a similar conceptual distinction between philosophical language and other uses of language.

According to Hegel, a return to the fluidity of cultivated thought marked a break with the rigid and formalistic philosophy of the understanding. For this reason, one of the key tasks of the *Phenomenology* was the 'actualising of the universal and giving it spiritual vitality, by the process of breaking down and superseding fixed and determinate thoughts' (PG.MM.37/B.94). The tendency to reify concepts was also recognised by Wittgenstein, who attributed it to the fact that we are often misled by pictures in language. Instead of parcelling out reality into hard and fast distinctions, Hegel saw, in the return to ordinary practices, the possibility of grasping the content of knowledge as an 'organic systematic whole' (PG.MM.38/B.95).

Ordinary linguistic practices, at any time in history, contain the richness of that culture's intellectual output. The most elementary judgment invokes the mediations of centuries of knowledge. What constitutes immediate knowledge for the schoolchild may well be the product of centuries of investigation. The starting point for the student is often the culmination of a generation's strivings encapsulated in the symbolic media. We have here the suggestion that ordinary language is not in contrast with the richness of philosophical discourse, but itself reflects the wisdom of generations, which is one important reason why 'philosophy requires no specialist terminology' (L.I.MM.220/JS.40). The richness of ordinary language has been recognised by Wittgenstein. According to Erich Heller:

> When Wittgenstein speaks of the language of everyday, he does not mean what 'actual usage' suggests he means. In fact he means Language means something that is of surpassing importance as the repository of our common humanity, of understanding, knowledge and wisdom.[3]

Hegel makes the same point in terms of an ontogenetic principle, according to which the embryo recapitulates the stages of the organic evolution of its species. By analogy, the individual who comprehends a culture acquires, in an abbreviated form, the intellectual output of that culture. For this reason, Hegel says:

> The individual must pass through the contents of the educational stages of the general Mind, as stages of a way that has been prepared and levelled out for him. Thus, in the case of various kinds of knowledge, we find that what in former days occupied the energies of men of mature mental ability sinks to the level of mere information, exercises, and even pastimes for children; and in this educational progress we can see the history of the world's culture delineated in faint outline (PG.MM.32/B.89–90)

The salient point here is that understanding a practice, or even an expression used within a form of life, presupposes considerable knowledge of that culture. Insofar as language is the 'repository of our common humanity, of understanding, knowledge and wisdom', ordinary language is saturated with philosophical insights, and one is only prevented from seeing them by a blindness of the understanding which reifies concepts and distinctions.

The essential question of the Preface is: How can one give expression to the speculative dimension of language without lapsing into the formalism and literalism of those philosophers who seek to secure philosophy (or conversely, ordinary knowledge) to definite foundations? How can one tap the philosophical richness which lies within everyday language and the sciences without putting forward the view that philosophy is a specialised discipline, complete with its own methodology and terminology for the study of some underlying realm of being? Philosophy can employ no other medium than that of the various sciences and systems of knowledge in which it is expressed. If this is so, we might ask, then how can philosophy dig beneath the surface of ordinary language in order to reveal the speculative dimension? It is important, at this stage, to distinguish Hegel from other philosophers who have held that beneath the surface of ordinary language, there lies a logical unity or logical form of language. When Hegel says 'What is familiar (*bekannt*) is not known (*erkannt*) simply because it is familiar' (PG.MM.35/B.92), he could easily be confused with Russell, who sought out the logical grammar that was allegedly hidden beneath ordinary language. In sharp contrast with Russell, Hegel rejects the idea of a hidden logical form of language. On the contrary, his remarks must be taken in the same sense as Wittgenstein's, who says:

> The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something—because it is always before one's eyes.) (PI.129)

The philosophical dimension of language is not deep in the sense that it is hidden from view; it is revealed by arranging and describing what is already known. Hence: 'Since everything is open to view there is nothing to explain' (PI.126).

The philosophical proposition (*Spekulativ Satz*), which Hegel saw hidden in ordinary language, is in marked contrast to the logical form of the subject-predicate proposition, which, from Aristotle to Russell, has been seen as the objective foundation of language. This assumption is encouraged by the ability to refer to a common grammatical structure within certain Indo-European languages. One is therefore led to the belief that there is one form common to these languages, which somehow lies beneath, and can be abstracted from them. Nowadays, however, the strength of the assumption that the subject-predicate form is the objective foundation of language has less compulsion than it did when Hegel was writing. It is a picture that can be broken by pointing to the examples of natural languages which do not exhibit the subject-predicate form. Max Black, for example, argues, 'Exposure to a "wild" language can have a decidedly liberating effect as a prophylactic against what might be called grammatical sclerosis'.[4] He is, of course, referring to languages such as the Kwakiutl or the Navaho. The idea of a single logical unity of language is also rejected by redirecting attentions to the usage of language.[5] But the appeal to usage is often bound up with the appeal to abandon philosophy. And this is where Hegel parts company with many modern philosophers, including those who share a similar theory of language with him.

Hegel's position can be illustrated with reference to Colwyn Williamson's perceptive criticism of the 'abstractist' tendency to distinguish between a sentence and what might be called the abstract proposition which the sentence actually *means*. Referring to Strawson's remark that 'it is senseless to ask, of the *sentence* whether it is true or false',[6] Williamson says:

> It would be extravagant to say that 'This sentence is true' is senseless. On the other hand, 'The sentence is true' and 'The sentence is what is true or false' certainly do have a strange ring about them But the strangeness is at the same time familiar:[7] it is the strangeness of *philosophy*. The philosopher wishes to provide a *formal* answer to the question: What is true or false? When he asks this question, he is hunting for a *philosophical object*: propositions, sentences, statements, and assertions are such objects It is for this reason that an appeal to our ordinary linguistic practices can somehow miss the point: the philosopher, because he asks 'What is true?' in a very special way, cannot find a direct answer in the ordinary situations in which we ask and answer this question. Our ordinary practice might, in some sense or another, provide an *alternative* to philosophy (the study of it might, for example, wean us of the desire to find philosophical objects; but it cannot directly answer the philosophical question. Precisely because he cannot resist asking questions about the form of the universe, the philosopher cannot hope to find unambiguous answers in its actual content [8]

For Williamson, it is clear that the appeal to ordinary practices is an appeal to abandon philosophy:

The purpose of what I am doing is essentially negative: I have been trying to clear the way, do away with philosophy.[9]

But for Hegel, whose criticism of the Aristotelian subject-predicate account of language squares with Williamson's criticism of abstractism, the return to ordinary practices is not a rejection of philosophy, but one more philosophical position; namely a move from the formalist philosophy of the understanding to dialectic, since the speculative dimension of thought is located in ordinary practices. Only in a very restricted and abstract sense do ordinary practices provide an alternative to philosophy; for ordinary practices are saturated with philosophical problems. The assumption that thinking is a mental process on a par with physical processes, the mind-body dichotomy, the fact-value dichotomy, the belief in an innate human nature, and many other one-sided assumptions attributed to philosophers, have their roots in ordinary practices and are adhered to and expressed by many who have never been introduced to the academic pursuit of philosophy. To attribute the parentage of these confusions to philosophers betrays a kind of vanity, or desire for notoriety, not in keeping with the spirit expressed in the widely acclaimed dictum 'Philosophy leaves everything as it is'. In fact, philosophical discourse originates in all walks of life, which means that ultimately we cannot draw too rigid a distinction between philosophy and the rest of life. The most basic and simplest questions and answers—'How are you?', 'How are things?', 'How is the world treating you?', 'Fine', 'Bearing up', 'So-so', 'Not myself'—are permeated with metaphysics. Such discourse is obvious, simple, exact, yet indefinable and complex. It shows how one is, presents a picture of the state of the world, how it is experienced, and is incapable of being interpreted into a more precise or scientific terminology. It belongs to a dimension of metaphysical discourse which speaks of the infinity of things. Yet only in rare moments of philosophical speculation do we reflect on such matters, and then one is unfortunately motivated to speak in more exalted terms. Philosophy permeates life at all levels. One finds more positivist assumptions amongst the welfare workers in the Town Hall than in any gathering of the Vienna circle. Much of modern medicine reflects metaphysically drawn distinctions between mind and body; the study of biology is beset with metaphysical distinctions between causality and teleology, structures and functions. Fallacious theories concerning human nature are extremely influential in practical politics, and the fact-value distinction, often in a comically exaggerated form, is an essential feature of the Anglo-Saxon legal system.

(The training programme for police procedure in the art of detection and prosecution is based on the assumption that facts can be completely divorced from any evaluation which may be later fastened on them.) What is more, in spite of many metaphysical absurdities contained in them, these systems actually work, an indication that philosophical problems are not resolved by an appeal to common practices.

Philosophy, then, has a reality, since it can be found in most human practices. Its problems arise in life and, for that reason, only in life will they be solved. The philosopher is not meant to remove himself from life. We find this view expressed in the young Hegel's comparison of Jesus with Socrates, where the former is criticised for taking his disciples out of society, turning them into men whose sole quality was discipleship. By contrast, the followers of Socrates remained social, playing an active part in the *Polis*.

For Hegel, there is no alternative to philosophy. Williamson comes very close to this position when he says that 'an appeal to our ordinary linguistic practices can somehow miss the point'. For Williamson, this is because the philosopher is searching for philosophical objects. But in another sense the 'point' missed is that these 'ordinary linguistic practices' are not ordinary, if by 'ordinary' one means without philosophical content. This kind of return to ordinary language, with its speculative dimension abstracted, is not to the actuality of human experience. Ordinary linguistic practices are no longer ordinary if the speculative dimension has been abstracted away—and if they are ordinary, then they cannot provide an alternative to philosophy.

2. THE OVERCOMING OF THE SUBJECT-PREDICATE FORM

Hegel's account of the speculative dimension of language is to be found in his attempt to subvert the traditional Aristotelian subject-predicate distinction—since speculative thought represents the overcoming of all the static distinctions of the understanding in an organic system of concepts. According to the Aristotelian tradition, the basic function of language is the ascription of predicates to a subject, qualities to an object. The structure of language is held to reflect the relationship between an object and its properties. For a proposition to have truth values, something (P) must be said of something else (S). In opposition to the traditional account, Hegel argues that the grammatical subject on its own is merely an empty

name, and that a proposition has meaning by virtue of the act of predication:

> Starting from the subject, as if this were a permanent base on which to proceed, it discovers, by the predicate being in reality the substance, that the subject has passed into the predicate, and has therefore ceased to be subject: and since in this way what seems to be the predicate has become the entire mass of the content, whole and complete, thinking cannot wander and ramble about at will, but is restrained and controlled by the weight of the content (PG.MM 58/B.119)

What Hegel means when he speaks of the predicate becoming the 'entire mass of the content' is that the subject and predicate do not refer to two distinct entities as the 'S is P' form implies, but that the proposition expresses a single thought. Insofar as the mediating consciousness can ascribe a predicate to a subject, he must do so by virtue of a rule governing what can be predicated—'thinking', says Hegel, 'cannot ramble about at will'. Not any pair of terms can be meaningfully joined together by the copulative 'is'. We might say that this rule constitutes an internal relationship between the subject and predicate of a proposition. Failure to follow this rule could give rise to what Hegel describes as an 'infinite proposition' (a category mistake), for example, 'The mind is no elephant' and 'A lion is no table' (Enz.I.173), where subject and predicate exhibit an incompatible external relation. On the other hand, the 'identical proposition' (tautology), for example, 'A lion is a lion' and 'Mind is Mind' (Enz.I.173), exhibits an internal relationship but says nothing.

Insofar as meaningful propositions are neither arbitrary nor tautologous, they must conform to a rule of predication. This rule is applied and determined by the mediating consciousness.[10] So in order to know the rule of predication, one must know something about the development of consciousness, which in turn requires an understanding of the history and culture in which it has developed.

To appreciate the force of Hegel's argument, it is necessary to grasp the significance of Hegel's pun on the term 'subject' in his key proposition 'Substance is subject'—which, incidentally, is itself a good example of a philosophical proposition. It will be noticed that the term 'subject' occupies the place of the grammatical predicate. But in the above proposition, it refers to the knowing consciousness, whose overcoming of the subject-object distinction in the realisation that true knowledge of its object, the world, is really knowledge of itself, forms the content of the *Phenomenology*. Now, as we have seen, in a meaningful proposition, the predicate must 'become the entire mass of the content'. Moreover, the term 'subject' in the above proposition, as grammatical predicate, must have an internal, but not tautological, relationship with the grammatical subject.

This internal relationship is brought about by the mediating subject (i.e. the knowing consciousness) which gives a meaningful utterance to the philosophical proposition 'Substance is subject'. In this sense, punning on the word 'subject', Hegel draws attention to a connection between the subject as consciousness and the grammatical subject. The outcome of Hegel's tortuous punning is that the knowing subject replaces the grammatical subject and thus becomes 'the power which relates the various predicates one to the other in a meaningful organic fashion'.[11]

In this way, Hegel effects a complicated analogy between the grammatical predicate and the knowing subject and its object. Just as the grammatical predicate determines the subject, so does the experiencing subject determine its object. Just as there are no passive subjects in language to which *any* predicates may be attached, so consciousness does not passively remain unaffected simply receiving anything that comes to it.

Both the knowing subject and the grammatical subject have a similar internal relation to experience and predication, respectively, since both experience and predication are rule-governed, or as Hegel would say, 'mediated' activities.

3. THE PHILOSOPHICAL PROPOSITION

In this way, relying on the dual role of the term 'subject', Hegel introduces his discussion of the philosophical proposition. He shows how the internal unity between the subject and predicate in a philosophical proposition subverts and destroys the understanding of the traditional subject-predicate proposition. In doing so, he reveals how the philosophical employment of language overcomes misleading analogies derived from the grammatical structure of language. Says Hegel:

> The nature of judgement, of the proposition in general, which involves the distinction between subject and predicate, is subverted and destroyed by the philosophical proposition; and the identical proposition (tautology), into which the former becomes when subject and predicate are thus united, implies the rejection and repudiation of the above relation between subject and predicate. This conflict, between the form of a proposition and the unity of the concept which it expresses, resembles the relationship between metre and accent in rhythm Rhythm is the result of what hovers between and unites both. So in the case of the philosophical proposition: the identity of subject and predicate is not meant to destroy their distinction, as expressed in propositional form; their unity is to arise as a harmony of the element. The form of the proposition is the way its determinate sense appears, or is the accent that distinguishes the meaning it contains: that the predicate expresses the substance, and the subject itself falls within the universal, is, however, the unity wherein that accent dies away. (PG MM.59/B.120–21)

From what has been said earlier, it can be seen that Hegel's point here is that in the philosophical proposition, the grammatical predicate 'expresses the substance' whilst the grammatical subject 'falls within the universal', and that this unifying process is the work of the mediating or knowing subject. In other words, the subversion of the traditionally held subject-predicate relationship, expressed in the philosophical proposition, reveals a unity of thought which makes possible a reversal of the subject-predicate relationship. According to Hegel, there is but one thought: how this thought is expressed exhibits a convention in the use of symbols, which must not be confused with the actual entities to which it refers. Just as the grammatical predicate of the proposition 'Substance is subject' involves a reference to the mediating subject so, claims Hegel, is the grammatical subject of any philosophical proposition the result of a mediation through its predicate, performed by the mediating subject.

To clarify what might otherwise appear as an excessive play on words, Hegel offers two examples of philosophical propositions:

i. 'God is being.'

ii. 'The real is the universal.'

Since there is no essential difference between these two propositions, for the purpose of the present discussion at least, it is only necessary to consider the first one. Hegel chose 'God is being' because the term 'God' is easily recognised as the subject of many propositions depicting ultimate truth—which falls within the scope of philosophical inquiry. Typical philosophical propositions of this kind could be 'God is truth', 'God is absolute', or 'God is love, beauty, justice'. Hegel's point is relatively easy to grasp: the grammatical subject 'God' is a meaningless symbol unless mediated according to definite rules, through a predicate attributed by a knowing consciousness. In fact, God is known only through the predicates attributed to Him. But these predicates are not external, as they would be in the proposition 'God is Tuesday morning'; nor are they tautologous, since the predicates 'Being' and 'Truth' and so on actually *say* something about God. What exactly they do say must now become the relevant question. One thing is clear; it is not the empty nonsense of a tautology or category mistake. The meaning of the proposition, says Hegel, now resides in the predicate; it has the 'substantial significance' (PG.MM.59/B.121). But what does the philosophical proposition say?

We can answer this question by thinking of the way a sentence containing a reference to the mind-body distinction might be used in ordinary language in contrast to its usage in a philosophical dis-

cussion. For example, 'Your illness is in your mind, not in your body.' Both ordinary men and philosophers refer to this distinction. It is a philosophical distinction grounded in ordinary usage. But in the hands of a philosopher, the same grammatical structure applies to a different dimension of experience. This is relevant to Hegel's argument because he is highlighting an important feature of philosophical language; it calls attention to something *queer*. It has the grammatical form of everyday language and, moreover, is clearly rule-governed in the sense that the predicate is not arbitrarily attached to the subject but, like many of Wittgenstein's grammatical propositions, it strikes a dimension in language that has a disturbing effect on the reader. For this reason:

> The philosophical proposition, being a proposition, gives rise to the opinion that the relationship between subject and predicate and the customary procedure of knowledge are as usual. But the philosophical content destroys this way of proceeding and this opinion; one learns that what was meant was not what was meant to be meant, and this correction of one's opinion requires that one returns to the proposition and takes it now in some other sense. (PG.MM.60/B.122)

The philosophical proposition refers to what might be called the speculative depth of language and experience, which demands that it be taken in a different sense than what is called ordinary usage. But if the grammatical form is exactly the same as ordinary usage, what is it that gives the philosophical proposition its 'substantive significance'?

Hegel's explanation is in terms of the 'act of mediation', which the knowing subject performs between the subject and predicate. The philosopher who utters the proposition 'God is Being' is employing a form of speech that is saturated with the concept; achieving a conceptual unity which overcomes the rigid distinctions created in the surface forms of grammar. The implication is that the reader will find this striking and profound, but will not comprehend it until he, too, becomes saturated with the concept, freeing himself from misleading analogies drawn from the grammatical forms of language—which, according to Hegel, involves undertaking the sort of programme described in the *Phenomenology*. It is precisely because the philosophical proposition is mediated in this way that Hegel attacks all other attempts to give immediate expression to philosophical certitude; hence his rejection of commonsense, inner-intuition, mysticism, mathematics, history, and the imaginative language of art and religion, all of which provide an unsuitable medium for the expression of philosophical thought.

However, as we have seen, the medium for the expression of the philosophical proposition must not involve any specialist termin-

ology. In the Preface to the *Science of Logic*, he makes this explicit: 'Philosophy for the most part requires no peculiar terminology' (L.I.MM.21/JS.40).[12] Philosophical propositions do not differ from the propositions of 'cultivated thought' in which the truths of ordinary language and the sciences are expressed—since even the most sensuous of the sciences throw up concepts expressing philosophical perplexity: for example, the relation between a 'whole and its parts, a thing and its properties, and the like' (L.I.MM.21/JS.41).

4. PHILOSOPHY AND COMMONSENSE

It is precisely because philosophy adopts the same form of expression as cultivated discourse that philosophers have difficulty in making themselves understood. The excessive demands which the philosopher places on normal discourse create innumerable difficulties and misunderstandings.[13] Hegel sees here the root of many complaints concerning the unintelligibility of philosophical writings. To those who would condemn the philosophical use of language as merely unintelligible, Hegel points out that a 'good deal has to be read repeatedly before it can be understood' (PG.MM.60/B.122).

Hegel did not share the contemporary view that philosophy is a disease requiring some kind of therapy, nor would he accept the inferior status which several modern philosophers have bestowed upon philosophy. But whilst his upgrading of philosophy places him on the other side of the scale to the philosophers of ordinary language, he did share Wittgenstein's logical distinction between the philosophical use of language and ordinary usage, although he did not consider them to be mutually exclusive. Moreover, against the 'representatives of commonsense' (*Menschenverstand*), had much to say. Merely because ordinary language shares the same speech forms as philosophy does not mean that one can eliminate philosophy in favour of ordinary usage. To see the limits of language determined by ordinary usage may constitute a limiting factor upon discourse, with the philosophical employment of language falling outside this limit; but an appeal to ordinary usage cannot, as Wittgenstein himself recognised, provide an adequate refutation of philosophy:

> There is no commonsense answer to a philosophical problem. One can defend commonsense against the attacks of philosophers only by solving their puzzles, i.e., by curing them of the temptation to attack commonsense; not by restating the views of commonse. A philosopher is not a man out of his senses, a man who doesn't see

what everybody sees: nor on the other hand is his disagreement with commonsense that of the scientist disagreeing with the coarse views of the man in the street. (BB 58–59)

Whilst Hegel does not share Wittgenstein's therapeutic intentions, he does share the view that philosophy is incapable of being refuted by appeals to 'what everyone knows'. For the same reason, Hegel pours scorn on the assumption that 'everybody understands how to philosophise straightaway, and pass judgment on philosophy, simply because he possesses a criterion for doing so in his natural reason—as if he did not in the same way possess the standard for shoemaking in his own foot' (PG.MM.63/B.125). This criticism is levelled at the appeal to commonsense. Hegel recognised the shortcomings, indeed the dangers, of such an appeal, since commonsense, like Scripture, can always be cited for both sides of an issue. The ambiguity of the appeals to commonsense, or popular opinion, is why Hegel is suspicious of the writings of Cicero and therefore ranks him alongside 'fanatics and mystics', who, appealing to feeling, may or may not strike the truth, but have no rational basis for their arguments since the 'ultimate appeal . . . is made to the fact that men are constituted such as they are by nature' (GP.I.MM.114/HS. 93). For this reason, Hegel is critical of Cicero's boast that Socrates had 'brought philosophy down from the heaven to earth' (GP.I.MM.445/HS.389).

Philosophically, the appeal to commonsense is arbitrary and tyrannical, prohibitive of that rationality which distinguishes humanity from the beasts. Thus in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, in a passage which anticipates his criticism of Jacobi, Krug, and Fries in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel issues what was to become his familiar warning against the tyranny of commonsense. The following remarks apply no less to the enemies of philosophy today than they did at the time Hegel wrote them:

Since the man of commonsense appeals to his feelings, to an oracle within his breast, he is done with anyone who does not agree. He has just to explain that he has no more to say to anyone who does not find and feel the same as himself. In other words, he tramples the roots of humanity underfoot. (PG.MM.64–65/B.127)

The position is itself another kind of formalism, since its holder need not trouble with the 'effort of the concept', but simply appeal to immediate feelings without any consideration of the formative process (*Bildung*) by which this immediacy of feeling was reached. A 'royal road to science' requires only a reading of prefaces of philosophical texts for which one can 'put his trust in healthy commonsense'. But, adds Hegel caustically, he might like to 'read

reviews of philosophical works first and first paragraphs of the works themselves' (PG.MM.65/B.127–28).

It is important to Hegel that the turning away from philosophy to commonsense or ordinary language, merely because it shares the same grammatical form, is seen as a move towards abstraction and the omission of a dimension to discourse that is essential to human life. The philosophical dimension may be an idle one, it may be a holiday, but holidays are an essential aspect of human activity—try abolishing them. Consider how some economies depend entirely on the tourist trade. Similarly, the philosophical dimension of language is an essential ingredient of the sciences and human culture. For this reason, Hegel distinguishes between the ordinary man and his anti-philosophical 'representative' when he says that the 'public attitude is quite different from that of its "representatives"' (PG.MM.66/B.130). The analogy here is very strong with those newspaper editors who take it upon themselves to 'represent the man in the street' and invariably treat him as a zombie who simply wants to do what he is told, have no thoughts of his own, never wants to go on strike or take industrial action, and is eager to play his part should his leaders declare war on his behalf. Periodically, it is quite a shock to realise that the public may have different interests to those who assume a knowledge of those interests. Very often, a worker does not identify himself with his job, and contrary to the official interpretation, not all the British 'Tommies' during wartime relish the prospect of a good fight.[14] The analogy can be drawn with philosophy: unlike their representatives, the public can decide whether or not a philosopher has something important to say, that he is calling attention to an important dimension in their experience, providing that he does not cut himself off from his milieu, resort to esoteric terminology and conduct his philosophical investigations in the manner of a specialist unconcerned with matters outside his profession. The philosopher is a 'child of his time', and if he speaks to the public in the language in which his problems occur, he need not fear that his work will go unrecognised. The public may find much of what he has to say unintelligible, but if the problems are clearly expressed, if they have a meaning in their way of life, they are capable of recognising its profundity and are often willing to take it upon themselves to try to understand what is being said.

We can bring out the above point in the following example: When Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* were published in English during the late 1950s, the current intellectual climate, largely influenced by 'End of Ideology Theories', supported the opinion that they were unintelligible. Yet the awareness of what Marx had

to say on alienation, indeed an understanding of the *Manuscripts* themselves, as a concrete factor in industrial relations long before the flood of learned books on the subject was released. The strangeness of Marx's concepts was grasped by many who could not, by the standards of the time, be said to have grasped his arguments. On the other hand, the 'commonsense representatives'—the reviewers of philosophical books on behalf of the 'uniformed' public—'convinced of their own competence, put all the blame on the author' for any initial difficulty in understanding of such a work (PG.MM. 66/B.130).

Hegel has put his finger on a curious paradox concerning the recurrent utilitarian depreciation of philosophy. Under the influence of commonsense-philosophers, the questioning slogan 'When do we say that in ordinary language?' has echoed throughout academic cloisters. Very often, it is employed as a prophylactic against philosophy. But a return to ordinary language as such is to miss the whole point of philosophy—unless one has grasped the significance of the urge to go beyond ordinary usage. The return is otherwise to a language purged of its philosophical content, to a world without wonder, since 'ordinary language' philosophy abstracts away the philosophical dimension of human experience. This is one reason why Wittgenstein found it necessary to defend the metaphysical writings of Heidegger *et al.* from the attacks of his over-enthusiastic disciples.[15] Hegel's point. of course, is that the public, untainted by the philosophers of 'ordinary language', are capable of recognising the philosophical dimension of language to which their representatives have closed their ears. It is with uncanny accuracy that Hegel's polemic against the 'reviewers' of his *Phenomenology* strikes against the 'commonsense' anti-Hegelian movement pioneered by English philosophers at the turn of this century.

Ordinary language, for Hegel, is permeated with philosophical assumptions and distinctions which cannot be dismissed in a return to some (metaphysical) ordinary state. For this reason, Hegel is closer to ordinary language than are many Anglo-Saxon philosophers, since he recognised that it constantly expresses its philosophical dimension,[16] and that the criterion for the assessment of a philosophical work is to be found in the practice of ordinary men—as opposed to their anti-philosophical representatives. Throughout the *Phenomenology*, each presentation of the philosophical absolute takes place in a concrete historical situation; it is always given a socio-historic content, such as a shape of consciousness, or a nation, and is allowed to speak for itself.

It is, however, important to note that Hegel is not saying that the

philosophical dimension of language is superior to ordinary usage, if by superior it is meant that the truths of philosophical certitude can provide a refutation of the truths of science and normal experience. Philosophical truth is distinct from other systems of knowledge—even though it is present in them—and is not the truth of a meta-science. This was Moore's mistake when he tried to combat what he thought to be the scientific hardness of metaphysics with commonsense. 'As a matter of fact', says Hegel, 'non-speculative thinking has its rights too, which are justified, but disregarded in the speculative way of stating a proposition' (PG.MM.61/B.122). The philosopher is calling attention to something important, something profound, which is in no way contradicted by appeals to ordinary language. Nor does he contradict commonsense; he simply disregards it.

The difference between ordinary usage and philosophical propositions is not in form, but in the mediating subject. The philosopher stands within the sphere of philosophy. The Hegelian philosopher is one who has drunk deeply the presentations of the *Phenomenology*, and has freed himself from the natural assumptions concerning a fixed order of reality. Since a specialist terminology is unnecessary and can only distort philosophical insight, the philosopher must write ordinary language and present human experience in such a way as to draw attention to its philosophical dimension. He must transcend the ordinary ways of thought by constantly showing that natural assumptions are not grounded in a transcendental reality. This is the responsibility of the individual philosopher—there is no general prescription for writing philosophy—much depends on skill, knowledge of the sciences, breadth of vision, and the lengthy precess of mediation by which the vision was reached. To understand what is going on in a philosophical work implies that one is standing within the sphere of philosophy: it involves a special kind of understanding internal to the activity of philosophy. There can, however, be no guarantee that the philosopher will exact this understanding from the reader and there is always the risk that his propositions will be treated as the propositions of normal discourse and the sciences—instead of an attempt to draw attention to their speculative dimension—and that a future Moore may 'refute' him. Indeed, says Hegel, there will always be this tension between the language of philosophy and ordinary usage. This difficulty seems to recur continually and seems to be an 'inherent feature of the matter itself' (PG.MM.51/B.123).

Perhaps the clearest example of the logical distinction between philosophy and ordinary experience can be seen in the following

remark concerning the relationship of the absolute (philosophy), expressed at one level, towards the absolute expressed at another level:

> The absolute idea may in this respect be compared to the old man who utters the same creed as the child, but for whom it is pregnant with the significance of a lifetime. (Enz.I.237.Zu.)

If we take the reference to the creed as an analogy with the absolute, we see how, in both cases, statements about the absolute express what it means to those concerned. Whilst it is expressed in the same form, its meaning has changed according to the experience of the *subject*. In the same way, the philosophical dimension of language and experience takes the same form as any other expression, but the meaning attributed to it is bound up with the experience and life-style of those to whom it is expressed. Examples here can be multiplied indefinitely: the Hopi rain dance, should it ever find its way into the twenty best-selling records list, might contain the same form as when performed by its original artists, but the meaning, the mediations through which one would see it, are different on each occasion. By analogy, in philosophy it is the mediations the subject brings to a proposition which determine whether it is to be read as a philosophical proposition or as a statement of empirical fact. There is no guarantee that one will read into it what the philosopher has put into it, other than having the thoughts of the philosopher one-self: in Hegel's case, by going through the *Phenomenology*. It is for this reason that, towards the end of the Preface, Hegel commits his philosophy, his account of the absolute, to the test of history, when he expresses the hope that a public will justify his version of conceptual analysis. Says Hegel:

> We may rest assured that it is in the nature of truth to force its way to recognition when the time comes, and that it only appears when its time has come, and hence appears too soon, and never finds a public that is not ripe to receive it. (PG.MM.65/B.129)

There is no rigid set of rules by means of which we can avoid confusion between the philosophical dimension and other uses of language. And Hegel's philosophy was to suffer from this confusion. As late as 1959, philosophers were talking about Hegel's 'amateur pseudo-scientific speculations'.[17] But this misunderstanding can be traced back to the publication of the *Phenomenology*, when the history of the attempt to 'formalise' his dialectic began, bringing with it a mass of material denouncing Hegel for his formalism and the like. However, Hegel does offer some suggestions to combat misunderstanding, when he warns against the tendency to arrest and

reify concepts, especially his own. 'Philosophical truths', he warns, 'easily take the character of mere edification' (PG.MM.62/B.124). For example, when philosophical truths are stated about God or being, one must be careful to avoid reading them as a piece of information or edification, since the predicate does not refer to anything in the world, but to the philosophical dimension of language itself. To avoid confusing philosophy with edification, Hegel offers the advice that the former 'must always retain the dialectical form, and exclude everything which is not grasped conceptually' (PG.MM. 62/B.124). Insofar as reality is dialectical and admits of no hard and fast distinctions, philosophy, which reflects on reality, must overcome all distinctions and misleading grammatical forms.

5. THE 'EFFORT OF THE CONCEPT'

> The last royal road is for the student to think for himself. (Hegel, MM. *Werke* 2, p. 557)
>
> I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking But, if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own. (Wittgenstein, PI.p.viii)

Towards the end of the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel promised that a description of the succession of shapes of consciousness as presented in the following pages of the book would eventually reveal the nature of absolute knowledge (philosophy). How well did he keep his promise? Towards the end of the *Phenomenology*, it becomes clear that the absolute is the standpoint of philosophy and is nothing over and above the means of attaining it; that in fact the absolute, or philosophy, was present in every shape of consciousness. Philosophy, argues Hegel, requires no specialist terminology or methodology other than that employed within the various systems of human knowledge. But the ability to grasp the philosophical dimension of human experience is dependent upon the kind of educative programme presented in the *Phenomenology*. This programme consists of the constant breaking down of fixed assumptions, the rejection of all attempts to postulate the foundations of knowledge, which are often alleged to be exempt from conceptual analysis. It is the recognition that what is necessary, natural, and determined is the work of the concept, human *praxis*, at various stages of its development; that what is necessary and immediate from this standpoint may not be so from another standpoint. The postulation of transcendental truths, argues Hegel, reflects a

tendency to take a short cut, to eliminate the long and arduous task of achieving the fluidity of mind necessary for a trip into the philosophical dimension of language. Intuition, picture-thinking (*Vorstellungen*), mysticism, commonsense, history and mathematics were all ruled out as paradigms of philosophical certitude, precisely because they accept certain unquestionable assumptions. There is no 'royal road to science', says Hegel, and no substitute for the 'effort of the concept'.

What of one who asks how it is possible to understand the philosophical dimension of language? Hegel's answer is: examine each and every branch of cultivated thought, where philosophy has its origins, and discover it yourself. So ultimately the true Hegelian must master the sciences of his time. This is why the Hegelian method can never be grasped solely by a reading of Hegel—which can lead only to confusion and the formalisation of his method. For Hegel, philosophy arises in response to other philosophies and to problems raised in the sciences and cultural systems. 'Not only must philosophy be in agreement with our empirical knowledge of nature, but the *origin* and *formation* of the Philosophy of Nature presupposes and is conditioned by empirical physics' (Enz.II.246). The *Phen*omenology must be seen as an introduction to philosophy which presupposes that one has already arrived at the standpoint of philosophy before reading it. In a very important sense, we cannot acquire the Hegelian method from Hegel, but must have reached this standpoint ourselves. Indeed, Wittgenstein's comment that the *Tractatus* 'will only be understood by someone who has himself had the thoughts expressed in it' (TLP.p.3), applies equally to the *Phenomenology*.

It is clear that for Hegel, philosophy was of a higher status than the other sciences. This, unfortunately, echoes a utilitarian attitude towards philosophy which obscures the peculiar relationship between philosophy and other systems of knowledge. The work of Wittgenstein, too, lends encouragement to a utilitarian attitude towards philosophy, one which ranked it at the opposite end of the scale to Hegel. But having grasped that philosophy lies outside the utilitarian scale of importance, one can begin to understand the peculiar sense in which it was important to Hegel and Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein never spoke of the attainment of absolute knowledge, nor did he conceive of the attainment of a philosophical breakthrough through the 'effort of the concept', although he did express something very close to it when speaking, as he often did, of the importance of philosophy. His urging of his colleagues to 'go the bloody hard way'[18] bears a striking resemblance to the mood of the Preface to the *Phenomenology*.

Unfortunately, Hegel and Wittgenstein gave impetus to a tendency to trivialise and formalise philosophy; an ironic dialectical reversal which can only be attributed to the 'cunning of reason'. The notorious Hegelian legend has been well recorded,[19] and Wittgenstein, too, lived long enough to see his work reduced to a dogma.[20] It is ironic that both saw the dangers of their methods, but could do nothing to prevent the reification of concepts and the confusion between philosophy and the scientific, religious, and artistic dimensions of language, which can only be overcome by 'the effort of the concept'. They were prevented because the essence of their contribution was that philosophy should be descriptive, not legislative, which is why 'philosophy which once seemed obsolete, lives on'.[21]

Hegel knew this. Before committing his work to the hands of the reviewers, he made it clear that a strictly descriptive philosophy must fail to put an end to the tendency to conduct philosophy as a science concerned with investigations into a realm of transcendental certainty, complete with its own esoteric jargon—for the very reason that it was descriptive and not normative. And whilst he was concluding the Preface to the *Phenomenology* with 'the feet of those who will carry you out are at the door'—a rebuke to his reviewers and his sole prediction in philosophy—philosophers were already committing themselves to a pre-Hegelian standpoint.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Merold Westphal, 'Hegel's Theory of Religious Knowledge', in *Beyond Epistemology: New Studies in the Philosophy of Hegel* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), p. 41.
2. T.D. Weldon, *Vocabulary of Politics* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1953), p. 107.

CHAPTER I

1. Hegel does not draw a distinction between knowledge and methodology.
2. German and French distinguish between *Erkenntnis* and *connaissance*, on the one hand, and *Wissen* and *Savoir*, on the other. The former emphasises the act, process, form, faculty, or means of knowing, and the latter the passive content of what is known. In English we might speak of cognition and knowledge.
3. René Descartes, *Meditation on the First Philosophy*, First Meditation.
4. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book I, edited with an Introduction by A.D. Woozley (London: Fontana, 1964), ch. 1.1.
5. *Ibid.*, ch. 1.6.
6. George Berkeley, 'Principles of Human Knowledge', in *Berkeley: A New Theory of Vision and Other Writings* (London: Everyman, 1963), i.
7. *Ibid.*, iv.
8. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, ed. D.G.C. Macnabb (London: Fontana, 1962), p. 42.
9. *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 2nd ed., trans. N. Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 9.
10. S.M. Engel, *Wittgenstein's Doctrines of the Tyranny of Language: An Historical and Critical Examination of His Blue Book*, with an Introduction by S. Toulmin (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), p. xi.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. xi–ii.
12. *Critique of Pure Reason*, A5.
13. Lecture 13, dated 5.6.35, p. 10; quoted from a collection of unsigned lecture notes appended to a mimeographed copy of the *Blue Book* in the Hoose Library of Philosophy, University of South Carolina; taken by Margaret Macdonald, 1934–35. Quoted by S.M. Engel, *op. cit.*, p 10.
14. 'Where does the heat come from? Where does the heat go to? Such childish questions in the mouths of mature men shape the character of a century.' Ernst Mach, 'The Economical Nature of Physics', in *Theories and Observation in Science*, ed. R.E. Grandy (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973), pp. 17–18.

15. This point has been made by John Burnet in an explanation of why philosophy cannot be identified with science. 'The problem of reality', he says, 'involves the problem of man's relation to it, which at once takes us beyond pure science. We have to ask whether the mind of man can have any contact with reality at all, and, if it can, what difference will it make to his life.' *Greek Philosophy From Thales to Plato* (London: Macmillan, 1964), p. 10.

16. See Renford Bambrough, *Reason, Truth and God* (London: Methuen, 1969), especially chapter 1.

17. *Ibid.*, pp 7–8.

18. Commenting on the unwritten part of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein wrote: 'My work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have not written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one. My book draws limits to the sphere of the eternal from the inside as it were, and I am convinced that this is the ONLY rigorous way of drawing these limits. In short I believe that where *many* others today are just *gassing*, I have managed in my book to put everything firmly into place by being silent about it. And for that reason, unless I am very much mistaken, the book will say a great deal that you yourself will want to say. Only perhaps you won't see that it is said in the book. For now I would recommend you to read the Preface and the conclusion, because they contain the most direct expression of the point of the book.' Paul Engelmann, *Letters from Wittgenstein with a Memoir*, trans. L. Furtmüller, ed. B.F. McGuinness (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), pp. 143–44.

This point is then elaborated by Engelmann: 'Positivism holds—and this is its essence—that what we can speak about is all that matters in life. *Whereas Wittgenstein passionately believes that all that really matters in human life is precisely what, in his view, we must be silent about.* When he nevertheless takes immense pains to delimit the unimportant (i.e. the scope and limits of ordinary language), it is not the coastline of that island which he is bent on surveying with such meticulous accuracy but the boundary of the ocean' (*ibid.*, p. 97).

19. 'Does not my study of sign language correspond to the study of thought processes, which philosophers used to consider so essential to the philosophy of logic? Only in most cases they got entangled in inessential psychological investigations, and with my method too there is an analogous risk' (TLP.4.1121).

20. The first title Hegel gave to the *Phenomenology* was *Science of the Experience of Consciousness* when it was published in 1807. The word 'experience' appeared in bold print in the middle of two nouns.

21. Throughout this text, the expression 'taking seriously' will be used to refer to the descriptive aspect of Hegel's method.

22. Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. J. Shapiro (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 8.

23. See also GP.III.MM.334/HS.429.

24. It is interesting to note that Wittgenstein refers to these lines in OC.402, which, according to the thesis presented in this chapter, bears a close resemblance to Hegel's anti-foundational approach. See also OC.110, 204, 411.

25. As Hegel says: 'People in the present day have got over Kant and his philosophy: everyone wants to go further. But there are two ways of going further—a backward and a forward. The light of criticism soon shows that many of our modern essays in philosophy are mere repetitions of the old metaphysical method, an endless and uncritical thinking in a groove determined by the natural bent of each man's mind' (Enz.I.41.Zu.).

26. K.L. Reinhold (1754–1823), *Contributions to an Easier Survey of the Condition of Philosophy at the Beginning of the 19th Century*, 1801. Hegel describes it as 'philosophising before philosophy'.

27. Sir K.R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Hutchinson, 1959), p. 111.

28. J.L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1962), p. 104.

29. Royston Clowes points out how 'many years were to elapse before viruses could be seen. In spite of this, ways were found to study them that were exploited so successfully that when they were in fact made visible for the first time, little was revealed that was not already known.' *The Structure of Life* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1967), p. 148.

30. This raises the following question: Is Hegel throwing out all the achievements of critical philosophy in favour of immediacy, arbitrary assertions and speculative assumptions? If so, this would run counter to his remarks in *The Logic of Hegel* (I.41.Zu.), where critical philosophy is seen as an improvement on speculative licence. It would run counter to his remarks on romantic assumptions concerning common-sense which appear in most of his prefaces. The answer, however, is that at this stage, Hegel is not laying down *any* conditions for knowledge of the absolute, but simply destroying the picture, held by critical philosophy, that knowledge is an organon that can be examined prior to its actual employment.

31. Hume, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

32. Habermas, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

33. See Allen Janik and Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (London: Weidenfeld, 1973), p. 23, where it is argued that Wittgenstein held this assumption until 1928–29.

34. 'Here it is worth remarking that the truth of the *Tractatus* theory would be death to natural theology; not because of any jejune positivism or any "verificationism", but simply because of the picture theory of the "significant proposition". For it is essential to this that the picturing proposition has two poles, and in each sense it represents what may perfectly well be true. Which of them is true is just what *happens* to be the case. But in natural theology this is an impermissable notion; its propositions are not supposed to be the ones that happen out of pairs of possibilities; nor are they supposed to be logical or mathematical propositions either.' G.E.M. Anscombe, *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (London: Hutchinson, 1959), p. 78.

35. 'It must be possible for the 'I think' to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought at all. . . . ' Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B.131.

36. Habermas, *op cit.*, p. 13.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

38. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke*, 3:486. Cited by Habermas, *op. cit.* My remarks on Nietzsche in this section are heavily influenced by chapter 12 of *Knowledge and Human Interests*.

39. *Ibid.*, *Werke*, 3:499.

40. *Ibid.*, *Werke*, 3:903.

41. For a further discussion of Hegel's criticism of the view that the world can be classified according to instincts and needs, see chapter VII.

42. *Op. cit.*, *Werke*, 3:726.

CHAPTER II

1. 'To see that thought in its very nature is dialectical, and that, as understanding, it must fall into contradictions—the negative of itself—will form one of the main lessons of logic' (Enz.I.11).

2. Following Kenley Royce-Dove in 'Hegel's Phenomenological Method', in *New Studies in Hegel's Philosophy*, ed. W.E. Steinkraus (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970).

3. Concerning this paradox of the logical circle, Charles S. Hardwick, in his study of Wittgenstein, says: 'His struggle to say what cannot be said (a carry over . . . from the *Tractatus*) is a recurrent theme in his later work. Wittgenstein recognises that he must attempt to give a correct picture of language. He is acutely aware of, and constantly struggles against the "logical circle" that had been the crucial problem in his *Tractatus*: that is, the notion that all talk about language must be carried on within language' *Language Learning in Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), pp 16–17.

4. According to P.M.S. Hacker, philosophy, as practised in the *Tractatus*, 'has the *de facto* status of a description of logical form but a *de jure* status of nonsense'. *Insight and Illusion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), p. 116.

5. When speaking of Hegel's or Wittgenstein's 'method', it is important to bear in mind that neither laid claim to *the* method of solving philosophical problems. The nearest we get to a method in Wittgenstein is found in the following remark he once made to F. Waismann, which is not far removed from Hegel's 'phenomenological method': 'I once wrote: the only correct method in philosophy would be to say nothing and leave it to others to make claims. I now adhere to this. What the other cannot do is separate out, gradually and in the right order, the rules of grammar that the questions solve themselves.' *Ludwig Wittgenstein und der Wiener Kreis*, shorthand notes recorded by F. Waismann, ed. B.F. McGuinness (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964), p. 183. Just as Hegel advises us to 'make no contribution', Wittgenstein says: 'I make the other person aware of what he is doing and refrain from giving any instructions' (*ibid.*, p. 186). This approach is repeated in the *Investigations*, where Wittgenstein argues that if someone is using conflicting rules for the same words, one brings him to see the source of his confusion. But the ultimate decision must be *his*, not the therapist's. Nevertheless, it must be conceded that there is a definite ambivalence in Wittgenstein's attitude towards language and philosophy, respectively, which is clearly absent in the work of Hegel.

6. 'Shapes of consciousness' (*Gestalten des Bewusstsein*), sometimes called 'forms of consciousness', is an expression employed by Hegel to serve a similar purpose as Wittgenstein employed the term '*Lebensformen*'. As such, they are not to be confused with ideologies.

7. Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science* (London: Routledge, 1959), p. 5. Unfortunately, Winch does not attribute this insight to Hegel, since he locates the origins of the 'underlabourer' conception in the rejection of the 'master scientist view of the philosopher . . . the absurdities to which it may lead to are amply illustrated in Hegel's amateur pseudo-scientific speculations' (*ibid.*, p. 7).

8. Martin Heidegger, *Hegel's Concept of Experience*, with a section from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. Kenley Royce-Dove (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 96.

9. J.N. Findlay, 'Comment on Weil's "The Hegelian Dialectic" ', in *The Legacy of Hegel*, ed. J.J. O'Malley *et al.*, Proceedings of the Marquette Hegel Symposium 1970 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972), p. 66.

10. J. Loewenberg, *Hegel's Phenomenology: Dialogues on the Life of Mind* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1965), p. 15.

11. *Ibid.*

12 *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid*

14. For this reason, it is misleading to speak of 'Hegel's epistemology' as if he were following a programme similar to Kant's. This view underlies a paper by R.C Solomon entitled 'Hegel's Epistemology', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (October 1974), in which it is argued that 'Hegel's epistemology is an attempt to rework and make consistent the key arguments in Kant's Transcendental Analytic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*' (p. 277). There is, in Solomon's argument, an assumption also held by several commentators who have misunderstood the radical nature of Wittgenstein's later philosophy by speaking of his 'theory of knowledge' or 'theory of language'. But neither Wittgenstein nor Hegel were advancing a theory; they were doing away with theory of knowledge. Insofar as one finds epistemological theories in Hegel, they are nothing more than the theories contained in the various 'shapes of consciousness' he has undertaken to describe. Insofar as he employs Kantian principles, it is only to *describe* their immanent development and ultimate self-negation

15. Bambrough, *op cit.*, p. 93.

16. Heidegger, *op cit.*, pp. 52–53.

17. The notion that dialectical progress hinges on the removal of false perspectives has been put forward by J.N. Findlay: 'Another example of the arrival at a goal by the simple removal of a false perspective and the substitution of a better one, is the famous transition at the end of the *Logic* where the content of the absolute idea, the goal of the dialectic, is simply said to be "the system of which we have been hitherto studying the development" i.e., dialectic itself, where the end of the journey is simply seen to be the journey itself, and the method that has been followed on the journey' (Enz.I.237.Zu.). 'It is by the capacity to understand and accept this last type of dialectical transformation that the true Hegelian is marked off from his often diligent and scholarly, but still profoundly mistaken misinterpreter, who still yearns after the showy spectacular climax, the absolute coming down in a machine accompanied by a flock of doves, when a simple arrest and return to ordinariness is in place.' 'Hegel's Use of Teleology', in *New Studies in Hegel's Philosophy*, p. 96. One must be wary, however, against taking the reference to the 'arrival at a goal' too literally. The goal is not the end of the line, but an awareness of the nature of the journey. It is in this sense only that we can speak of the removal of a false perspective.

18. Bambrough, *op cit.*

CHAPTER III

1. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, edited with an Introduction by C. J. Arthur (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970), p. 65.

2. John Anderson, 'Art and Morality', *The Australasian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy*, 19 (December 1941): 257.

3. See, for example, PR.141–42.

4. 'It is only abstract understanding which takes the terms of mediation and immediacy, each by itself absolutely, to represent an inflexible line of distinction, and thus draws upon its own head the hopeless task of reconciling them' (Enz.I.70).

5. As Bosanquet says: 'The house, the cathedral, the judge's robe, the general's uniform, are ultimate facts for the child or the savage; but for the civilised man they are symbols of domestic life, of the church, and of the state.' 'On the True Conception of Another World', in *Essays and Addresses* (Swann Sonnenschein, 1889), p. 98.

6. There is a strong similarity between a 'system of mediations' in Hegel, and Wittgenstein's notion of a 'language game'.

7. See *U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report*, 1873, p. 527.

8. See P.L. Berger, *Pyramids of Sacrifice* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1977), p. 197.
9. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Middlesex: Penguin, 1968), p. 34.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. P.T. Geach, *God and the Soul* (London: Routledge, 1969), p. 118.
13. *Ibid.*
14. For Hegel's views on punishment as the annulment of crime, see PR.96–104.
15. A.D. Woozley, 'Socrates on Disobeying the Law', in *The Philosophy of Socrates*, ed. G. Vlastos (New York: Doubleday-Anchor, 1971), p. 307.
16. *Ibid.*
17. See T.S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1971).
18. Nietzsche, *op cit.*, p. 31.
19. Burnet, *Greek Philosophy*, p. 120.
20. Woozley, *op. cit.*, pp. 307–8.
21. Nietzsche, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
22. See the Master-Servant dialectic in *The Phenomenology of Mind.*
23. Xenophon, *The Defence of Socrates Before the Jury*, 29.
24. *Ibid.*, 4.
25. *Ibid.*, 6–9.
26. Andrew Barker, 'Why Did Socrates Refuse to Escape?', *Phronesis* 22, no. 1 (1977). See also Woozley, *op. cit.*, p. 315.
27. Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
28. Peter Winch, 'Can a Good Man be Harmed?', in *Ethics and Action* (London: Routledge, 1972), pp. 202–3.
29. *Crito* 45 C–D.
30. *Crito* 43 A.
30. *Apology* 37E–38A.
32. Xenophon, *Recollections of Socrates*, Book 4, ch. 8., 9–10.
33. Hegel's reference to posterity here applies particularly to the historian of philosophy.
34. *The Defence of Socrates Before the Jury*, 26.
35. From a statement made by Vanzetti after receiving sentence, April 9th, 1927. *The Letters of Sacco and Vanzetti*, ed. D. Frankfurter and G. Jackson (New York: Viking, 1955).
36. Goethe to Chancellor Müller, 6 June 1824. Quoted by Albin Lesky in *Greek Tragedy*, trans. H.A. Frankfort (London: Ernest Benn, 1965), p. 8.
37. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1449 B.
38. 'Insofar as the tragic situation first appears in the *antagonism* of individuals who are thus employed to act, the same can only assert itself in the field of human life' (A.III.MM.540).
39. Albin Lesky, for example, in *Greek Tragedy*, argues against Hegel that 'Creon does not act as the representative of the *Polis*, which is unanimously in favour of Antigone (733); his decision is arrogant and evil' (*op cit.*, p. 108). Of course there is something arrogant and evil about the arbitrary use of power by he who puts the interests of the state above all else. It is the evil of excessive bureaucracy. But this is one of the contradictions which beset those who turn blindly to bureaucratic formalism and the maintenance of law and order. In times of stress, the bureaucrat may take his principles to extremes Imprisonment without trial and suppression of minorities are nowadays familiar features of the attempt to maintain democratic

traditions. As long as the rule of law is pursued to the exclusion of all else, the story of Creon will repeat itself.

40. It is important to note that Hegel was not reducing tragedy to some Procrustean theory derived from Sophocles. Such an account of Hegel's 'theory of tragedy' is to be found in F.L. Lucas, *Tragedy: Serious Drama in Relation to Aristotle's Poetics* (New York: Hogarth 1962), and has been adequately refuted by W. Kaufmann in 'Hegel's Ideas About Tragedy', in *New Studies in Hegel's Philosophy*, pp. 201–20, where it is argued that Hegel 'did not develop anything that one could call a theory of tragedy if one means by a theory more than a loose collection of ideas and passing comments' (p. 216). My emphasis on Hegel's account of tragic collision should not be read as an exposition of Hegel's alleged 'theory of tragedy'. I have simply employed some of Hegel's comments on tragedy to throw light on what he sees as the tragedy of Socrates.

41. The fate of Greek society is discussed in chapter 6 on the *Phenomenology*.

CHAPTER IV

1. See Charles Taylor, 'The Opening Arguments of the *Phenomenology*', in *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York: Doubleday, 1972).

2. Bertrand Russell, *Logic and Knowledge 1901–1950*, ed. R.C. Marsh (London: Allen and Unwin, 1956), p. 201.

3. Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (Moscow: Progress, 1959), p. 108.

4. G.E. Moore, 'A Defence of Commonsense', in *Philosophical Papers* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1959), p. 53.

5. The difficulty involved in making a determinate reference, in the absence of the system of conventions, reveals an important similarity between Wittgenstein and Hegel. Wittgenstein says that 'whenever anything is seen, it is "*this* which is seen", accompanying the word "this" by a gesture embracing my visual field (but not meaning by "this" the particular objects which I happen to see at the moment). One might say "I am pointing to my visual field as such, not at anything in it". And this only serves to bring out the senselessness of the former expression' (BB.64). Wittgenstein's treatment of the word 'here' is similar: 'The philosopher who thinks it makes sense to say to himself "I am here" takes the verbal expression from the sentence in which "here" is a place in common space and thinks of "here" as the here in visual space. He therefore really says something like "Here is here" ' (BB.72).

6. In this respect, Marx's criticism of Feuerbach reveals a striking affinity with Hegel's account of sense-certainty: 'He (Feuerbach) does not see how the sensuous world around him is, not a thing given direct from all eternity, remaining ever the same, but the product of industry and of the state of society; and, indeed, in the sense that it is a historical product, the result of the activity of the whole succession of generations, each standing on the shoulders of the preceding one, developing its industry and its intercourse, modifying its social system according to the changed needs. Even the objects of the simplest "sensuous certainty" are only given him through social development, industry and commercial intercourse. The cherry tree, like almost all fruit trees, was, as is well known, only a few centuries ago transplanted by *commerce* into our zone, and therefore only *by* this action of a definite society in a definite age it has become "sensuous certainty" for Feuerbach.' *German Ideology* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970), p. 61.

7. Loewenberg, *Dialogues on the Life of Mind*, p. 35.

8. See also Wittgenstein's case of a pupil whose reactions to the teaching of arithmetic differ from our own, which he compares with a person who naturally reacts to the gesture of pointing with the finger outstretched by looking in the direction of a line from the finger tip to the wrist (PI.185).

9. For an account of the social nature of gestures, turn to H. Mead's *Mind, Self and Society*, where it is argued that 'every gesture comes within a given social group or community to stand for a particular act or response, namely the act of response which it calls forth explicitly in the individual to whom it is addressed, and implicitly in the individual who makes it; and this particular act or response for which it stands is its meaning as a significant symbol'. *Mind, Self and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1963), p. 47.

10. George Santayana, *Scepticism and Animal Faith* (London: Constable, 1923), p. 15.

11. P.T. Geach, *Mental Acts* (London: Routledge, 1957), p. 120.

12. Loewenberg, *Dialogues on the Life of Mind*, p. 39.

13. *Ibid.*

14. R. Plant, *Hegel* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1973), p. 105.

15. James A. Ogilvy, 'Reflections on the Absolute', *Review of Metaphysics* 28, no. 3 (March 1975): 521.

16. Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?* (New York: Scribner, 1969), pp. 19–20.

17. Hegel's example may not appear so bizarre if we consider that many twentieth-century biologists also reject the primacy of sense-certainty in animals. For example: 'One should hesitate, although some do not, to apply such words as "consciousness" or "perception" to an amoeba, for instance, but it is perfectly obvious from the reaction of the amoeba that something in its organisation performs acts of generalisation; it does not react to each bit of food, say, as a unique object, but in some way, in some sense of the word, it *classifies* innumerable different objects all within the class of foodstuffs. Such generalisation, such classification in that sense, is an absolute minimal requirement of being or staying alive.' G.G. Simpson, *Principles of Animal Taxonomy* (New York: Columbia University, 1961), p. 3.

18. Unless we interpret the builders' analogy as an attempt to show the impossibility of foundational language games, it is difficult to see what light this sheds on the nature of language. Imagine a group of builders only having the expressions 'slab', 'beam', and so on. What sort of building site is this? It is an interesting but scarcely observed fact that on a real building site in the United Kingdom expressions like 'bricks', 'sand', 'mortar', when uttered in isolation, signify moments of tension. They are uttered to make public the fact that someone has failed to maintain a supply of materials. They signify a convention for revealing that someone is not 'up to the job', an informal means of telling the management to dismiss him. It is clear that far from being elementary expressions, in actual usage, 'bricks', 'mortar', etc. are permeated with economic and political concepts.

19. Edward Sapir has pointed out that there is nothing biologically necessary about the acquisition of language; that it comes entirely from social origins: 'It is of course true that in a certain sense the individual is predestined to talk, but that is due entirely to the circumstance that he is born not merely in nature, but in the lap of society that it is certain, reasonably certain, to lead him to its traditions. Eliminate society and there is every reason to believe that he will never learn to talk, that is to communicate ideas according to the traditional system of a particular society.' *Language: An Investigation into the Study of Speech* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1955), p. 4.

CHAPTER V

1. Hegel's discussion of abstract idealism is to be found in the chapter of the *Phenomenology* entitled 'Reason's Certainty and Reason's Truth' (MM.178–85/B. 272–80).
2. An adequate discussion of 'Self-Consciousness' lies outside the scope of this study.
3. G.E. Moore, *Philosophical Studies* (London: Routledge, 1922), p. 12.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
5. See Moore, *Philosophical Papers.*
6. On the distinction between the 'ordinary man' and his 'representative', see Hegel's comments towards the end of the preface to the *Phenomenology.*
7. The reference to Kant is from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, quoted by Moore in *Philosophical Papers*, p. 127.
8. Moore, *Philosophical Papers*, p. 127.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
11. The reference to Goethe is *Wilhelm Meister VII*, 9. 1796. Quoted by W. Kaufmann in 'The Young Hegel and Religion', in *Hegel*, ed. A. MacIntyre (New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1972), pp. 98–99.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

CHAPTER VI

1. Ludwig von Bertalanffy, *General System Theory* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1967), pp. 185–87.
2. The perceiving consciousness was examined in the second section of *Consciousness.* It is Hegel's thesis that before reaching an ultimate reconciliation between thought and being, *Reason* must repeat all the anomalies of *Consciousness.* At this level, the objects of knowledge are neither sense data nor perceptual qualities, but are the scientific laws which govern their behaviour.
3. '*Dieses Bewusstsein, welchem des Sein die Bedeutung, des Seinen hat, sehen wir nun zwar wieder in das Meinen und Wahrnehmen hineingehen, aber nicht als in die Gewissheit eines nur Anderen, sondern mit der Gewissheit, dies Andere selbst zu sein*' (PG.MM.185).
4. Bertrand Russell, *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1948), p. 5.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 9–10.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 522.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 524.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 526.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid*
13 *Ibid.*, p. 527.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 526.
15. The same path was indicated by Hume when he said: 'But though animals learn many parts of knowledge from observation, there are also many parts of it which they derive from the original hand of nature; which must exceed the share of

capacity they possess on ordinary occasions; and in which they improve little or nothing, by the longest practice and experience. These we denominate Instincts, and are so apt to admire as something very extraordinary, and inexplicable by all the disquisitions of the human understanding. But our wonder will, perhaps, cease or diminish, when we consider that the experimental reasoning itself, which we possess in common with the beasts, and on which the whole conduct of life depends, is nothing but a species of instinct or mechanical power, that acts in us unknown to ourselves; and in its chief operations, is not directed by any such relations or comparison of ideas, as are the proper objects of our intellectual faculties. Though the instinct be different, yet still it is an instinct, which teaches a bird, with such exactness, the art of incubation, and the whole economy and order of its nursery.' *An Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 2nd ed., ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon, 1902), p. 108.

16. Russell, *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits*, pp. 496–97.

17. Commenting on Russell's remarks, Noam Chomsky has summed up precisely the view Hegel characterises as 'reason's instinct': 'We might say . . . that our mental constitution permits us to arrive at knowledge of the world insofar as our innate capacity to create theories happens to match some aspects of the structure of the world. By exploring various faculties of the mind, we might, in principle, come to understand what theories are more accessible to us than others, or what potential theories are accessible to us all, what forms of scientific knowledge can be attained, if the world is kind enough to have the required properties.' *Problems of Knowledge and Freedom* (London: Fontana, 1972), p. 25.

18. In the case of Chomsky, the relevant phenomena is human speech, but the assumptions are basically the same as those of Russell and the observer-scientist.

19. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 171.

20. The connection between the observation-theory dichotomy and the assumption that words function primarily as names has been illustrated by R.E. Grandy in the following passage: 'The most important problems generated by the distinction concern, of course, the nature of theoretical terms. The reason for calling the non-theoretical terms observational is that it has been assumed (or argued) that terms such as "purple", "apple", and so on can be used to describe observations. This assumption is closely tied to a view of language according to which the meaning of a word consists in the rules that connect the word with the experiences of the speaker of the language. Given this assumption, one seems to be faced with the problem that theoretical terms are not connected in any direct way with experience and hence it is unclear whether they have any meaning at all. For example, if one thinks that the meaning of "apple" consists of the rules correlating the word with sensations of touch, sight or taste, then it is difficult to see what meaning "electron" has since electrons cannot be tasted, seen, or touched. This line of argument leads to the conclusion that it is questionable if theoretical terms are cognitively significant, which is the linguistic formulation of the question of whether or not theoretical entities exist.' *Theories and Observation in Science*, p. 5.

21. According to P.K. Feyerabend: 'The empirical model assumes a language, the "observation language", that can be specified independent of all theories and that provides content and a testing base for every theory. It is never explained how this language can be identified nor are there any indications how it can be improved. Carnap's rule that the language should be used by a language community as a means of communicating and that it should also be observational in the vague sense of containing quickly decidable atomic sentences is clearly unsatisfactory. In the sixteenth century a language of this kind would have included devils, angels, incubi, succubi,

absolute motions, essences, and so on. Now this fact, taken by itself, is no objection against the scheme *provided* the scheme permits us to overcome devils in a rational manner. This is not the case. An observation language is a final standard of appeal. There are no rules which would permit us to choose between different observation languages and there are no methods that would show us how an observation language can be improved.' 'Philosophy of Science: A Subject With a Great Past', in *Minnesota Studies in Philosophy of Science*, vol. 5. ed. R H. Stuewer (Minneapolis. 1970. p 182).

22. *Ibid.* Feyerabend elsewhere suggests that this 'predilection for observation and experiment has been, and still is, due to the assumption that only a thoroughly observational procedure can exclude fruitless hypothesising and empty talk; to the hope that empiricism is most likely to prevent stagnation and to further the progress of knowledge; and to the conviction that the sciences, and especially the physical sciences, owe their existence and spectacular success to the fact that they have adopted the empiricist creed'. 'Problems of Empiricism', in *Beyond the Edge of Certainty*, ed. R.G. Colodny (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 145.

23. T.S. Kuhn recalls an account by James K. Senior: 'An investigator who hoped to learn something about what scientists took the atomic theory to be asked a distinguished physicist and an eminent chemist whether a single atom of helium was or was not a molecule. Both answered without hesitation, but their answers were not the same. For the chemist the atom of helium was a molecule because it behaved like one with respect to the kinetic theory of gases. For the physicist, on the other hand, the helium atom was not a molecule because it displayed no molecular spectrum.' *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 50. According to Kuhn, both men were correct, and both were speaking of the same particle, but they were seeing it through their own research training and practice.

24. P.K. Feyerabend, *Against Method* (London: New Left Review, 1975), p. 160. For an interesting essay on how scientific theories are rejected without recourse to observational criteria, see M. Mulkay's examination of 'The case of Dr. Velikovsky', in 'Cultural Growth in Science', in *Sociology of Science* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1972), pp. 126–42.

25. Feyerabend, *Against Method*, p. 303.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

27. J.J.C. Smart, 'The Reality of Theoretical Entities', in *Theories And Observation in Science* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 96.

28. Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol I* (Moscow: Progress 1961), p. 390, footnote. The conceptual similarity between Darwinian theory and the prevailing economic theories probably accounts for the relative ease with which the former was accepted. There was 'little opposition', says A.R. Manser, because it was expected: 'In fact Darwin's struggle between species (or individual members of species) was like that between Victorian firms; the efficient survived and made profits, the inefficient went bankrupt or "died out".' 'The Concept of Evolution', *Philosophy* 40, no. 151 (January 1965): 21.

29. Clowes, *The Structure of Life*, p. 115.

CHAPTER VII

1. Whilst this chapter is primarily concerned with an explication of the discussion on 'Organic Nature' in the *Phenomenology*, it has been necessary to supplement Hegel's remarks with references to *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*.

2. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T.M. Knox (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1948), p. 254.

3. Jacques Monod, from a BBC interview, July 1971. Quoted by J. Lewis in *The Uniqueness of Man* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1974), p. 13.

4. According to Descartes, the body was a 'machine which because it was made by the hands of God, is incomparably better ordered and has in itself more wonderful movements than could ever have been invented by men'. *Discourse on Method*, Part V.

5. Monod, July 1971. Quoted by Lewis in *The Uniqueness of Man*, p. 9.

6. It would, of course, be inaccurate to suggest that modern analysis of organic compounds is strictly in accord with the rules and criteria of the inorganic sciences. But this is not due to any vitalist agency. Analysis of organic compounds reveals that they are composed of atoms of the element carbon (C). These carbon atoms are usually associated with hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen atoms—and sometimes with atoms of sulphur and phosphorous. Organic chemistry—and by implication, the study of life—involves the study of the chemistry of carbon and the compounds that it forms with the above-mentioned elements which are united in small numbers to form molecules. Unlike the inorganic sciences, organic chemistry deals exclusively with larger molecules, drawn from a fewer range of elements. The area of interest focuses on the shape and arrangement of the molecules. See Clowes, *The Structure of Life*, pp. 56–57.

7. Major achievements in microbiology, the breaking of the DNA code, the discovery of the structure of the DNA molecule, and yet further developments in cell physiology, have, nevertheless, strengthened the mechanist standpoint and encouraged molecular biologists to believe that they have the secret of life within their grasp.

8. For an account of the experiments of Pasteur and Buchner and the spontaneous generation controversy, see Clowes, *The Structure of Life*, pp. 11, 86–90, 98–99. According to Clowes, the theory of spontaneous generation has a long history in biology and is far from obsolete today. In medieval times, it was advanced in the rather unscientific belief that mice were spontaneously generated from piles of rags; and as late as the Renaissance, it was widely held that mussels were generated from sand. But apart from these absurdities, it is still held that at some stage there is a transition from inorganic to organic systems. Even if one accepts the current favourite with the press, that life was at some time introduced from outer space, one is only pushing the question a stage further. If one is committed to a rigid distinction between organic and inorganic systems, the question will be: Where did it come from before its arrival here?

9. For Hans Driesch, the foundations of science were clearly Newtonian: 'in spite of Maxwell and Einstein, we may even make the classical mechanics which knows solid atoms and nothing but two forms of mechanical energy—the actual form expressed by the formula $m/2\ v^2$, and the potential form, expressed by Newton's law of attraction.' *The Science and Philosophy of the Organism* (London: A. & C. Black, 1929), p. 269.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

11. Hans Driesch, *Der Vitalismus als Geschichte und als Lehre* (Leipzig: Barth 1905), p. 209.

12. Giovanni Blandino, *Theories on the Nature of Life* (New York: Philosophical Library 1969), p. 97.

13. Whilst allowing for the fact that complex machines require an external designer, a case can be made for an analogy between the evolution of certain species and the evolution of the motor car. See A.R. Manser, 'The Concept of Evolution', *Philosophy*, pp. 18–34.

14. Another version of this argument can be found in Dr. H. Kalmus' 'Axioms and Theorems in Biology', *Nature* 198 (1963): 240–43, where he says that 'a machine

theory of life would require that living organisms, like lifeless machinery, must require external controls, whereas vitalists ought to believe that life—unlike any known machinery—may perhaps run without human participation be it external—though of course, not without external energy or material. It will be noticed that these propositions are a reversal of the usual more superficial attitudes; traditionally mechanists say that life runs "quite by itself like a machine", whereas vitalists assert that organisms are directed by something separate or additional: thus the theorems of both vitalists and mechanists are scarcely deductions from their cherished axioms' (p. 24).

15. Clowes, *The Structure of Life*, p. 289.

16. Ludwig von Bertalanffy, *Problems of Life* (London: Watts, 1952), p. 9. Whilst this chapter and the following one rely very heavily on the writings of Bertalanffy, I make no claim that the latter is an Hegelian. There is no record, to my knowledge, that Bertalanffy has ever considered himself an Hegelian. His references to Hegel are few and show no signs of his ever studying Hegel in any significant depth. My reliance upon twentieth-century writers to throw light on problems discussed by Hegel is necessitated by a conception of Hegel's phenomenological method—a philosopher must draw upon the knowledge at his disposal.

17. As mentioned in the previous chapter, what seems to be an original contribution to science often turns out to be a convenient reformulation of the methodology of some other science. The analytic and summative method finds its parallels in the atomistic empiricism of the last three centuries, and is, in many respects, a reflection of the concept of 'rationality', which, according to Georg Lukács, typifies the bourgeois mode of production. Rationalism, argues Lukács, consists of breaking the work process into units, thus ignoring personal idiosyncracies: it is therefore formalistic, begetting of bureaucracy and the adjustment of men to formalistic 'laws'. See Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. R. Livingstone (London: Merlin, 1971).

18. Russell, *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits*, p. 49.

19. In fairness to Russell, it must be conceded that he recognised that an 'amputated limb, or an eye removed from its socket, no longer serves the purpose that it served when joined to a body: the limb cannot walk and the eye cannot see' (*ibid.*)

20. Bertalanffy, *Problems of Life*, p. 19.

21. The rejection of the analytic method is not strictly confined to the biological sciences. Atomic physics encounters wholes that cannot be resolved into isolated elements, economists no longer speak of 'economic man' and, with a few notorious exceptions, social scientists have abandoned the search for the human essence in the individual.

22. Bertalanffy, *Problems of Life*, p. 20.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

26. The analogy between living systems and a flame suggests an interesting parallel between General System Theory and some of the view held by Heracleitos. Consider: 'All things are an equal exchange for fire and fire for all things, goods are for gold and gold for goods.' Fragment 90, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, G.S. Kirk and J.E. Raven, (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1966), p. 199. Compare this with: 'The flame, say, of a candle is a steady state. The continued existence of the state involves a continual supply of potential energy which the flame receives as "food" through the wick and as oxygen from the air. When undisturbed, the flame remains the same in size and in shape. Thus one might be tempted to believe that its status is that of an

equilibrium. But in the sense in which the word is commonly used the flame is certainly not in a state of equilibrium. In order to see this we need only apply the same test to which we just subjected the adult organism: what is the genesis of the flame? We light a candle with a match. On the wick there appears a tiny flame. The flame grows spontaneously until it attains a maximum size and at the same time a certain shape, which then remains unaltered.' W. Kohler, 'Closed and Open Systems', in *Systems Thinking*, ed. F.E. Emery (Middlesex: Penguin, 1969), pp. 63–64.

27. Bertalanffy, *General System Theory*, p. 38.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.* That open systems do not achieve a state of equilibrium is also argued by W. Kohler, who says that 'in a healthy normal condition many vertebrates are by no means in equilibrium with regard to their immediate environment. Mammals, for instance, *stand* when at rest; for the most part they lie down only when slightly or seriously fatigued. Many fishes assume when at rest a position in which their heaviest parts are turned away from the direction of gravitation. And yet in a state of equilibrium the centre of gravity both of mammals and of fishes should be lowered as far as possible. Since no outer physical forces keep the mammals standing and the fishes swimming against the pull of gravitation, i.e., an unstable position, such organisms must, when fresh, healthy, and therefore in their standard state, contain sets of vectors and processes which *prevent* the attainment of equilibrium. These factors represent a certain amount of potential energy. But no physical system that is as such in a state of equilibrium can at the same time preserve an energy reserve by which it avoids reaching an equilibrium with regard to the environment. In the present example those factors seem even to keep the organism in a state *that departs from an equilibrium as much as possible*.' *Systems Thinking*, pp. 61–62.

30. See Bertalanffy, 'The Theory of Open Systems in Physics and Biology', in *Systems Thinking*, pp. 77–79. It is important to note that the open-closed system distinction does not provide a distinction between living and non-living organisms. Being an open system, says Bertalanffy, 'is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the characteristic phenomena of life'. Bertalanffy to Blandino, February 1963, in *Theories on the Nature of Life*, p. 193. The motive behind General System Theory, he says, is to 'develop a new conceptual framework taking account of aspects of phenomena which, in the former "mechanistic" view, appeared to be outside of, and unamenable to science, purely "philosophical" or "metaphysical"' (*ibid.*, p. 192).

31. Bertalanffy, *Problems of Life*, p. 129.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

33. An example of a closed system determined by its initial state would be the motions of a 'planetary system, where the positions at time t are determined by those of time t_0, or a chemical equilibrium where the final concentrations depend on the initial ones'. Bertalanffy, 'The Theory of Open Systems in Physics and Biology', in *Systems Thinking*, pp. 75–76. This, of course, does not mean that *all* physical systems are determined by their initial stages ('Equifinality is found also in certain inorganic systems which, necessarily, are open ones'. *Ibid.*, p. 77), or that equifinality is a proof of vitalism. 'Equifinality', says Bertalanffy, 'can be formulated quantitatively . . . growth is equifinal. . . . According to quantitative theory, growth can be considered the result of a counteraction of the anabolism and catabolism of building materials' (*ibid.*, p. 76). There is nothing inexplicable about equifinality.

34. Bertalanffy to Blandino, quoted in *Theories on the Nature of Life*, p. 193.

35. Bertalanffy, *General System Theory*, p. 138.

36. Bertalanffy to Blandino, *Theories on the Nature of Life*, p. 194.

37. Morton Beckner, 'Function and Teleology', *Journal of the History of Biology* 2 (1969): 162.

38. See, for example, A.R. Manser, 'Function and Explanation', *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume XIVII* (1973), where it is suggested that 'it does not seem unreasonable to think that biology will become a full science when it has got rid of these notions' (p. 39). 'These notions' being, of course, 'teleological or functional' notions. According to Manser, 'functional statements are not necessary in biology' (p. 40) and could be replaced with some other terminology. It is true that functional language does not translate perfectly into the language of physics, but from this it does not follow, as Manser points out, 'that the functional language was *necessary* for an adequate description of the phenomenon' (p. 41). Sufficient change in scientific language which, incidentally, is always changing, can easily swing against teleological explanations. Just as the language of vitalism is largely ignored by modern biologists, so the language of teleology could, if it already has not, lose its exalted position. In the absence of some metaphysical principle, absolutely free from criticism, teleology, Manser concludes, is merely convenient. And by 'convenient', he means that it is possible 'to dispense with it without any important loss of meaning' (p. 42).

39. Simpson, *Principles of Animal Taxonomy*.

40. Jacques d'Hondt, 'Teleology and Praxis in Hegel's *Logic*', in *Hegel et le pensée Moderne* (Paris: 1970). References to this work are from pages 1–26 of an unpublished translation by A.R. Manser, Department of Philosophy, University of Southampton, 1974.

41. Manser, 'Function and Explanation' p. 45.

42. Lewis, *The Uniqueness of Man*, p. 34, footnote.

43. *Jensener Realphilosophie*, vol. 2, ed. J.H. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1931), p. 198. Also cited by Georg Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, where one can find a more comprehensive treatment of the role of labour in Hegel's concept of teleology and its similarities with the materialist dialectics of Marx and Engels. See *The Young Hegel*, trans. R. Livingstone (London: Merlin, 1976), ch. 6, pp. 344–45).

44. Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, p. 345. The parallel here is with the dialectical reversal of the master and slave relationship 'where the slave as a means acquires through work the necessary skills which render his as the essential consciousness) reveals the central role which the concept of teleology plays throughout Hegel's writings.

45. D'Hondt, 'Teleology and *Praxis* is Hegel's *Logic*'.

46. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER VIII

1. Hegel's use of expressions like 'inner' and 'outer' can be understood if one recognises that he is *describing* a standpoint characteristic of the 'philosophers of the Understanding' who operate with fixed categories, such as 'means-ends', 'inner-outer', and 'substance and accident'. For a further discussion of these abstract antinomies, the 'either-or' tendency of the abstract understanding, see Enz.I.112–59.

2. Bertalanffy, *General System Theory*, p. 25.

3. Bertalanffy, *Problems of Life*, p. 115.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 115–16.

5. David Bulmer, *The Anatomy of Human Morphology*, Inaugural Lecture (University of Southampton, 1972), p. 14.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

8. Bertalanffy, *Problems of Life*, p. 118.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 147–48.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
11. Bertalanffy resorts to similar language when he makes the same point: 'Living structures are not in being, but in becoming. . . . They are the expression of a ceaseless stream of matter and energy, passing through the organism and forming it at the same time' (*ibid.*, p. 181).
12. Bertalanffy, *General System Theory*, p. 69.
13. Bertalanffy, *Problems of Life*, p. 118.
14. 'The function of *any* recurring activity . . . is the part it plays in the society as a whole and therefore the contribution it makes to the maintenance of the structural continuity.' A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (London: Cohen and West, 1952), p. 181.
15. 'A strike, by putting the workers on the street, rolls the steam out of them—it reduces their demands and thus brings agreement and ratification; it also solidifies the authority of the union hierarchy.' William Serrin, *The Company and the Union* (New York: Alfred A. Kopf, 1973), p. 4.
16. Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science*, p. 74.
17. Simpson, *Principles of Animal Taxonomy*, pp. 17–18.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
21. This is an example of the tension between Hegel's own scientific insight and his commitment to a strictly descriptive phenomenological approach. His philosophy as *Nachdenken* was limited to the views expressed in the sciences of his day. This was unfortunate, since they shared a pre-Darwinian standpoint, and Hegel, who would have been happier within a Darwinian framework, was prevented by his own injunction to describe, from altering that which he was reporting. Malcolm Knox expresses Hegel's predicament well: 'His *Philosophy of Nature* might have been more highly regarded if it had explicitly adopted a theory of evolution; no theory could have better fitted Hegel's own views, but it was not the theory of the scientists who were his contemporaries, and this debarred him from speculation along this line.' 'A Plea for Hegel', in *New Studies in Hegel's Philosophy*, p. 13.
22. For a modern defence of numerical taxonomy, see R.R. Sokal and P.H.A. Sneath, *Principles of Numerical Taxonomy* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1963).
23. E. Mayr, *Principles of Systematic Zoology* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), p. 79.
24. Michael Ruse, *Philosophy of Biology* (London: Hutchinson, 1973), p. 163. Whilst I have relied heavily on Ruse in this section, I do not wish to convey the impression that he is inspired by or indebted to Hegel.
25. Sokal and Sneath, *op. cit.*, p. 49. See Ruse, *op. cit.*, for a philosophical cricicism of this statement.
26. See Eugene Linden, *Apes, Men, and Language* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1976), p. 85.
27. See Bertalanffy, *Problems of Life*, p. 48.
28. So named after the Greek Earth Goddess. James Lovelock and Sydney Epton, 'The Quest for Gaia', *New Scientist* (February 6, 1976): 304–6.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 304.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*, p. 305.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Hegel's conception of the earth as an organic whole, having no history of its

own, is to be contrasted with the kind of zoomorphism of P. Teilhard de Chardin in his concept of an evolutionary process towards a supreme consciousness, or Omega, which presupposes the intervention of some entelechical guide, or *élan vital*. (See, for example, *The Phenomenon of Man*.) For Hegel, the natural world has no supreme *end*; existing for itself, it has no history; it is like Hegel's description of the Bernese mountains, simply there. Nature, however, is not irrational; the various members do have certain *ends*, but insofar as they are ends, they are not subservient to some super-plan; they are to be understood in relation to their integration with other organic systems. Insofar as these ends are attributed, they are dependent upon the concept, the human conventions which determine how we are to see this or that.

34. See Bertalanffy, *Robots, Man and Minds* (New York: Braziller, 1967), pp. 66–67.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 67–68. According to Bertalanffy: 'Cybernetic systems are "closed" with respect to exchange of matter with the environment, and open only to information. For this reason, the cybernetic model does not provide for an essential characteristic of living systems, whose components are continually destroyed in catabolic and replaced in anabolic processes, with corollaries such as growth, development and differentiation' (p. 68).

36. George K. von Wright, who recognises the similarity between systems theory and the Hegelian conceptual framework, nevertheless conflates cybernetic principles with the open systems characteristic of Hegel's account of social and organic phenomena. Commenting on the popularity of cybernetics in the 'Socialist countries of Eastern Europe', von Wright says how he finds 'it very surprising that, to the best of my knowledge, very little has so far been done to reinterpret *systematically* the Hegelian conceptual framework, inherited and developed by Marxism, in the light of cybernetic or systems-theoretic ideas and terminology'. *Explanation and Understanding* (London: Routledge, 1961), p. 204. Whilst the present chapter may be seen as an attempt to carry out such a reinterpretation, it is important to distinguish the mechanistic application of systems theory in cybernetics from the concept of General System Theory employed to elucidate Hegel's position.

CHAPTER IX

1. Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1975), p. 97.
2. Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, p. 363.
3. William Leon McBride, *The Philosophy of Marx* (London: Hutchinson, 1977), p. 33.
4. W.H. Werkmeister, '*Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind* as a Development of Kant's Basic Ontology', in *Hegel and the Philosophy of Religion: The Wofford Symposium* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), p. 10.
5. See, for example, D.Z. Phillips, *The Concept of Prayer* (London: Routledge, 1965) and *Faith and Philosophical Enquiry* (London: Routledge, 1970).
6. John E. Smith, 'Hegel's Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of Spirit and the Religious Community', in *Hegel and the Philosophy of Religion*, p. 157.
7. Quoted by Kaufmann, 'The Young Hegel and Religion', in *Hegel*, pp. 67–68.
8. Georg Lukács reported in *Conversations with Lukács*, ed. Theo Pinkus (London: Merlin, 1974), p. 63.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Bosanquet, *Essays and Addresses*, pp. 104–5.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

12. In *The Logic of Hegel*, Hegel could be said to have anticipated the sociology of knowledge when he says that 'the Christian rite of baptism, although a sacrament, involves the additional obligation of a Christian upbringing. In short, religion and morals, however much they may be faith or immediate knowledge, are still on every side conditioned by the mediating process which is termed development, education, training' (Enz.I.67).

13. Bosanquet, *Essays and Addresses*, p. 106.

14. The term 'infinity' should not lead to great confusion. Instead of conceiving of infinity in terms of an unending straight line, we can grasp what Hegel means if we remember his metaphor of a circle. 'Infinity in the Hegelian sense', says Bosanquet, 'does not partake in any way of this endlessness or of the unreality which attaches to it. Its root-idea is self-completeness or satisfaction. That which is "infinite" is without boundary, because it does not refer beyond itself for explanation, or for justification; and therefore, in all human existence or production infinity can only be an aspect or element. A picture, for instance, regarded as a work of fine art, justifies itself, gives satisfaction directly and without raising questions of cause or of compassion, and is in this sense—i.e., in respect of its beauty—regarded as "infinite" ' (*ibid.*, p. 100).

15. There is a sense in which a pictorial representation can point towards something higher. We find it in Plato's *Phaedrus* where he offers a version of recollection which evokes what J.A. Stewart once called a 'transcendental feeling'. This is a feeling awakened by the presence of a sensible object; that feeling of 'having just now understood the true significance of things pictorially rendered'. *Myths of Plato* (London: MacMillan, 1905), p. 383. Such a feeling is held to be common in aesthetic experience, where the beautiful object symbolises some greater power. Or, as Plato says, it symbolises the 'form of which the sensuous is but an imperfect copy'. However, one must be careful not to confuse this experience with the insight derived from a philosophical investigation, and even more importantly, avoid thinking that pictorial representations actually stand for supernatural things. John Burnet, for example, quite rightly insists that there are 'no grounds for holding that even in the *Phaedrus*, the forms are regarded as supernatural "things" of any kind. The "super-celestial" region is clearly identified with that of pure thought, and the forms the mind beholds in it—Righteousness itself, Soberness itself, Knowledge itself—do not lend themselves in any way to crude pictorial fancies.' *Greek Philosophy*, p. 136.

CHAPTER X

1. Timothy Binkley, *Wittgenstein's Language* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), p. 163.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

3. For example, 'there is much to be said for the use of real, as opposed to imaginary examples in philosophy. It can add vitality to discussion and help to break down the idea that philosophical training and philosophical enquiry can have no relevance or value in the world outside our cloistered classrooms.' A. Flew, 'Philosophy and Language', in *Essays in Conceptual Analysis* (London: Macmillan, 1963), p. 7. Ironically, though Wittgenstein may have found the atmosphere of the cloistered classroom to his distaste, his actual teaching method, delivered to a tiny clique, his reliance on imaginative examples instead of scientific or historic ones, practised by lesser men, has done much more than any philosopher this century to foster the idea that philosophy is a 'specialist' activity.

4. Binkley, *Wittgenstein's Language*, p. 109.

5. Hegel uses the term 'science' (*Wissen*) synonymously with 'system'. This is to use *Wissen* in the broadest sense; not as we might ordinarily think of science, as a specialist discipline which has been contrasted with philosophy. Science, which embraces philosophy, is systematic knowledge; it is *organised* knowledge.

6. See W. Kaufmann, *Hegel: A Reinterpretation* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1970), who argues that 'Hegel's polemic against mere "edification" and the wish to be edifying (*erbaulich*) brings to mind Kierkegaard's *Edifying Discourses*. Kierkegaard's many polemical references to Hegel are better known than the fact that Hegel published his critique of Kierkegaard six years before the latter was born. Kierkegaard's authorship of *Edifying Discourses* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* has to be understood against the background not only of Hegel's *Logic*, which is usually cited in this connection, but also of the *Phenomenology* which is often ignored by Kierkegaard's expositors' (p. 399).

7. Hegel is referring to the Romantics, Schlegel, Schleiermacher, and Jacobi, but his remarks are equally applicable to his later critics, Kierkegaard and Tillich.

8. Kroner is clearly mistaken when he describes Hegel as a 'Christian mystic' in his Preface to Hegel's *Early Theological Writings*, p. 8. Hegel may have given this impression in the way he often quotes, with approval, some of the 'intuitive' insights of his predecessors when they can be justified independently, but this no more commits him favourably towards a mystical solution to philosophical questions than does Wittgenstein's respect for Ethics (see his remarks towards the end of the *Lecture on Ethics*) commits him to an ethical or religious standpoint. There is little doubt that Hegel was hostile to mysticism, just as he was hostile to any other short cut in philosophy. For an interesting discussion on the relationship between Hegel and Mysticism', see F.C. Copleston, Hegel and the Rationalisation of Mysticism', in *New Studies in Hegel's Philosophy*, pp. 187–200.

9. Although Hegel has often been criticised for his esotericism, there are many instances where Hegel himself is critical of the elitist tendency to cloak one's thoughts in obscure jargon in order to attain scientific status. Defending Goethe's Theory of Colours, he says: 'Goethe has been assailed for being a poet, not a professor. Only those who espouse certain jargon, certain theories, belong to the guild; what others say is quite ignored as if it simply did not exist. Often such people want to form a *caste* to be in exclusive possession of a science and let no one else form a judgment: jurists do so, for instance. But law (*das Recht*) is for everyone, and it is the same with colour. In such a caste (*Klasse*), certain fundamental conceptions are developed which mould everyone's thinking. If anyone does not speak as they do, he is supposed not to understand the subject; as if only the brethren of the guild has understanding of it. They are right; we do not grasp the subject in terms of *these* categories of the *understanding*, in terms of the metaphysics that they think should govern our thought on this matter. It is philosophers mainly who are snubbed; but it is just these categories that philosophers must attack' (Enz.II.320.Zu.).

10. Bertrand Russell, *My Philosophical Development* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1959), p. 241.

11. W.H. Walsh, *Metaphysics* (London: Hutchinson, 1963), p. 153.

12. According to Kaufmann, this is a reference to Fichte's popularising *Sun Clear Report to the Public at Large About the True Nature of the Newest Philosophy: An Attmept to Compel the Reader to Understand* (Berlin, 1801). See *Hegel: A Reinterpretation*, pp. 373 and 433.

13. The formalism Hegel has in mind, however, is chiefly Kant's triadic schematism found in the table of categories, and in Fichte's *Doctrine of Science*, 1794, which was also employed by Schelling. Ironically, Hegel has been credited with a doctrine

he is here attacking. His demand for intelligibility and his rejection of formalism have been transformed into their opposites in the hands of his supporters and detractors.

14. Hegel's basic insight into the nature of truth is expressed in the Preface in terms of a rejection of the foundationalist approach to knowledge. 'The truth is the whole' must be taken to mean that genuine certitude can only appear in the form of an organised system of knowledge. Hence, 'it is only as science or system that knowledge is actual and can be expounded. Further, any so-called basic proposition or principle of philosophy is also false insofar as it is merely a basic proposition or principle' (PG.MM.27/B.85).

CHAPTER XI

1. The ladder which Hegel extends to his readers is the presentation of shapes of consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Mind* from sense-certainty to absolute knowledge, wherein each shape is comprehended on its own terms. Whilst it is possible that Hegel was alluding to Jacob's ladder in *The Old Testament*, there is a similarity with Wittgenstein's ladder in the *Tractatus*.

2. There is, of course, a pun on the term 'end' here.

3. Erich Heller, 'Wittgenstein's Unpublished Notes', in *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Man and His Philosophy*, ed. K.T. Fann (New York: Dell, 1967), p. 104.

4. Max Black, *The Labyrinth of Language* (London: Pall Mall, 1958), p. 47.

5. This, of course, is what is important in both Wittgenstein and Austin.

6. Colwyn Williamson, 'Propositions and Abstract Propositions', in *Studies in Logical Theory*, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Series no. 2 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), p. 149. Strawson's remark is to be found in his *Introduction to Logical Theory* (London: Methuen, 1952), p. 175.

7. It is interesting to note how close this is to Hegel's remarks on the familiar being unknown because it is familiar. Another way of recasting Hegel's thought would be to say that philosophy exhibits a familiar queerness. The strangeness of philosophy is familiar to everyone who has acquired a level of sophistication in any discipline. It is the queerness of not knowing what is familiar, of questioning that which everyone knows, yet not asking for the answers that everyone knows. It is, for this reason, just as mistaken to urge the abandonment of philosophy for the familiarity of ordinary linguistic practices as it is to offer a "commonsense' answer to the philosopher's question. The familiar queerness of philosophy is a call to enter another dimension of human experience, which, Hegel maintains, is very important; although its importance can only be appreciated from *within* the sphere of philosophy.

8. Williamson, *Studies in Logical Theory*, p. 149.

9. *Ibid.*

10. It is not, however, the 'I' of the Cartesians. Instead, the mediating subject of any stage depicted in the *Phenomenology*, according to the ontogenetic principle, is a condensed version of Mind.

11. Daniel J. Cook, *Language in the Philosophy of Hegel* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), p. 147. For Cook's analysis of the 'speculative proposition', see pp. 142–48.

12. This advice is often ignored by those who feel it is necessary to provide a glossary of terms with their commentaries on Hegel.

13. Oddly enough, it is precisely because philosophers employ the medium of ordinary discourse that they are misunderstood by those who project rigid distinctions and dichotomies which are not in the original text. Bosanquet seems to have expressed this point when he said: 'The hardest of all lessons in interpretation is to believe that

great men mean what they say. We are below their level, and what they actually say seems impossible to us, till we have adulterated it to suit our imbecility.' *Essays and Addresses*, p. 95.

14. See, for example, the author's *Mutinies 1917–1921* (London: Solidarity, 1977).

15. 'Waisman reports a conversation at Morritz Schlick's house (30 December 1929) in which Wittgenstein brushed aside as over-intellectualistic the moral philosophy of G.E. Moore and his associates, and spoke with genuine respect for Heidegger: "I can well understand what Heidegger means by *Sein* and *Angst*. Man has an impulse to run up against the boundaries of speech. . . . "' Quoted from 'Men and Ideas: Ludwig Wittgenstein', by Stephen Toulmin, *Encounter*, (1969): 63. For a witty and penetrating account of the remoteness of Moore and his Bloomsbury circle from ordinary life, see J.M. Keynes, 'My Early Beliefs', in *The Age of Complexity*, ed. Herbert Kohl (New York: Mentor, 1965), pp. 51–67.

16. See Hegel's amusing essay '*Who Thinks Abstractly*' (MM.*Werke*, vol. 2, pp. 575–82).

17. See, for example, Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science*, p. 7.

18. See Rush Rhees, 'The Study of Philosophy', in *Without Answers* (London: Routledge, 1969), pp. 169–72. Wittgenstein's account of the 'bloody hard way', depicted by Rhees, bears a striking resemblance to Hegel's strictures against seeking 'mere edification' and other short cuts. For example: 'No development *outside* philosophy, for instance, can make philosophy any easier. Nor are there any developments which will make it possible to reach results which were impossible before. There can be nothing like the service which computers bring to mathematics. But neither can we hope for the development of new and simpler techniques which will enable us to carry out the whole thing much more simply, without having to go through all the trouble which used to beset us before' (*ibid.*, pp. 170–71).

19. See G.E. Müller, 'The Hegel Legend of Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19 (1958): 411–14.

20. Wittgenstein's fear has been recorded by Gasking and Jackson: 'I used at one time to say that in order to get clear how a certain sentence is used it is a good idea to ask oneself the question: "How would one try to verify such an assertion?" But that's just one way among others of getting clear about the use of a word or a sentence. For example, another question which is often very useful to ask oneself is "How is this word learnt?" But some people have turned this suggestion about asking for verification into a dogma—as if I'd been advancing a theory about meaning.' D.A.T. Gasking and A.C. Jackson, quoting Wittgenstein, in *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, p. 54.

21. I have taken this phrase from Theodor Adorno' *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1973), p. 3.

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Hegelian idealism is presented as one of the true precursors of twentieth-century philosophy, alive to problems raised and discussed by English-speaking philosophers of the post-Wittgensteinian era. Hegel's approach to epistemology, language, ethics, the natural sciences, religion, and art is examined against the background of twentieth-century thinkers such as Russell, Moore, von Bertalanffy, Kuhn, Feyerabend, and Wittgenstein.

Beginning with the criticism of foundationalist epistemology in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology of Mind*, this work rigorously pursues Hegel's alternative: a phenomenological presentation of the claims to possess philosophical knowledge in a series of shapes of consciousness or systematic wholes. How foundationalist epistemology is eclipsed by a descriptive approach constitutes the focus of the first two chapters. This is followed by an examination of the significance of the trial and death of Socrates in Hegel's *Lectures on The History of Philosophy*, and a look at the way in which one ethical system replaces another. In the following chapters, attempts to secure philosophically sound foundations of language, the sciences, and the revelatory foundations of religion are contrasted with Hegelian concepts of wholeness and system. The final chapters develop Hegel's thoughts on the appropriate medium for the expression of philosophical insights; his account of conceptual space, and the respective merits of religious and artistic thought-determinations as vehicles for the expression of philosophical truth.

This book is a scholarly discussion of some of Hegel's fundamental concepts, and is written in a manner which avoids much of the jargon that has surrounded Hegelianism. As such, it can serve as an introduction to Hegel as well as a contribution to more advanced discussions of Hegel's philosophy

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